

T W E L V E
S E R M O N S

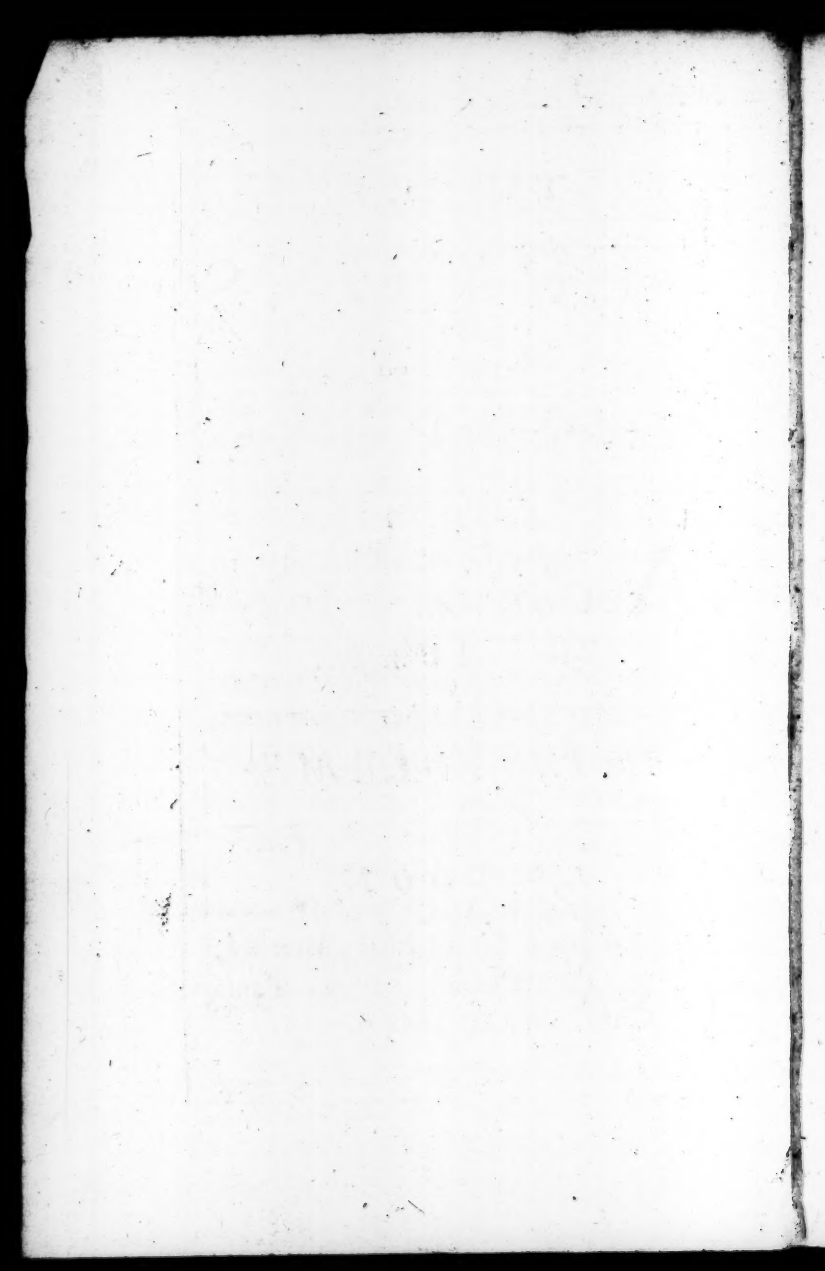
Preached on
Several Occasions.

By the Right Reverend Father in
God EDWARD Lord
Bishop of Worcester.

The First VOLUME.

L O N D O N,

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TH E R E will speedily be Published, a Second Volume of Sermons by the same Author.

SERMON I.

Preached at

St. Margarets Westminster,

Before the

Honourable House of COMMONS.

Octob. 10. 1666.

Amos IV. XI.

*I have overthrown some of you, as
God overthrew Sodom and Go-
morrah, and ye were as a fire-
brand pluckt out of the burning:
yet have ye not returned unto me,
saith the Lord.*

IT is but a very little time since you
met together in this place to lament
the remainders of a *raging pestilence*,
which the last year destroyed so many
thousand Inhabitants of the late great and

B

famous

Sermon First.

famous City : and now *God* hath given us another sad occasion for our *fasting* and *humiliation*, by suffering a *devouring fire* to break forth and consume so many of her habitations. As though the infected air had been too kind and partial, and like *Saul* to the *Amalekites*, had only destroyed *the vile and refuse*, and spared *the greatest of the people* ; as though the grave had surfeited with the bodies of the dead, and were loth to go in the execution of *God's* displeasure ; he hath employed a more furious Element, which by its merciless and devouring flames might in a more lively manner represent unto us the *kindling* of his *wrath* against us. And that by a *Fire*, which began with that violence, and spread with that horror, and raged with that fury, and continued for so long a time with that irresistible force ; that it might justly fill the beholders with confusion, the hearers of it with amazement, and all of us with a deep and humble sense of those sins which have brought down the judgments of *God* in so severe a manner in the midst of us.

For whatever arguments or reasons we can imagine that should compose the minds of men to a sense of their own or others calamities, or excite them to an apprehension

apprehension of the *wrath of God* as the cause of them, or quicken them to an earnest supplication to him for mercy, they do all eminently concur in the sad occasion of this days solemnity. For if either compassion would move, or fear awaken, or interest engage us to any of these, it is hard to conceive there should be an instance of a more efficacious nature, than that is which we this day bewail: For who can behold the ruins of so great a City, and not have his bowels of compassion moved towards it? Who can have any sense of the anger of God discovered in it, and not have his fear awakened by it? Who can (as we ought all) look upon it as a judgment of universal influence on the whole Nation, and not think himself concerned to implore the mercy of Heaven towards us? For certainly, howsoever we may vainly flatter and deceive our selves, these are no common indications of the frowns of Heaven; nor are they meerly intended as the expressions of *God's* severity towards that City which hath suffered so much by them; but the strokes which fall upon the head (though they light upon that only) are designed for the punishment of the whole body.

Were there nothing else but a bare permission of Divine Providence as to these things, we could not reasonably think, but that *God* must needs be very angry with us, when he suffers two such dreadful calamities to tread almost upon each others heels; that no sooner had *death* taken away such multitudes of our Inhabitants, but a *Fire* follows it to consume our Habitations. A *Fire*, so dreadful in its appearance, in its rage and fury, and in all the dismal consequences of it (which we cannot yet be sufficiently apprehensive of) that on that very account we may

(a) Lam.
2. 1.

justly (a) *lie down in our shame, and our confusion cover us*: because *God* hath Covered the daughter of Sion with a cloud in his anger, and cast down from Heaven to earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger. For such was the violence and fury of the flames, that they have not only defaced the beauty of the City, and humbled the pride and grandeur of it; not only stained its glory, and consumed its Palaces; but have made the Houses of *God* themselves a heap of ruins, and a spectacle of desolation.

And what then can we propose to ourselves as arguments of *God's* severe displeasure against us, which we have not either

ther already felt, or have just cause to fear are coming upon us without a speedy and sincere amendment? If a Sword abroad and Pestilence at home, if Fire in our Houses and Death in our Streets, if Foreign Wars and Domestick Factions, if a languishing State and a discontented People, if the ruines of the City and poverty of the Country, may make us sensible how sad our condition at present is, how much worse it may be (if *God* in his mercy prevent it not) we shall all surely think we have reason enough this day to lay to heart *the evil of our doings which have brought all these things upon us, and abhor our selves, repenting in dust and ashes.* That would seem indeed to bear some analogy with the present ruines of the City, and the calamities we lie under at this time; but *God* will more easily dispense with the pompous shews, and solemn garbs of our humiliation; if our hearts bleed within for our former impieties, and our repentance discovers its sincerity, by bringing us to that temper; that, *though we have done iniquity, we will do so no more.* That is the true and proper end, which *Almighty God* aims at, in all his Judgments: he takes no delight in hurling the World into confusions, and turning Cities into ruinous

heaps, and making whole Countries a desolation: but when he sees it necessary to vindicate the honour of his Justice to the World, he doth it with that *severity* that may make us apprehend his displeasure, and yet with that *mercy* which may incourage us to repent and *return unto the Lord*. Thus we find in the instances recorded in the Text, when some *Cities* were *consumed by him*; so that as far as concerned them, they were made *like to Sodom and Gomorrah*: yet he doth it with that kindness to the *Inhabitants*, that *they are pluckt as firebrands out of the burning*: and therefore he looks upon it as a frustrating the design both of his *Justice*, and of his *Mercy*, when he is fain to conclude with that sad reflection on their incorrigibleness; *Tet have ye not returned unto me saith the Lord*. Thus ye see what the design and scope of the words is, which I have read unto you, wherein we may consider,

1. The severity of the Judgment which God was pleased to execute upon them. *I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.*

2. The mixture of his mercy in the midst of his severity, *and ye were as a fire-brand pluckt out of the burning.*

3. The incorrigibleness of the people
not-

notwithstanding both. *Yet have ye not, &c.* In the first we have *God's Rod* lifted up to *strike*, in the second we have *God's Hand* stretched out to *save*, yet neither of these would make them sensible of their disobedience; though their *Cities* were *overthrown* for *their sakes*, though they themselves escaped not for *their own sakes*, but for his *mercies sake* only whom they had so highly provoked; *yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.* I am sure I may say of the two former parts of the Text, as our *Saviour* doth in another case, *This day hath this Scripture been fulfilled among you:* we have seen a sad instance of *God's severity*, a *City* almost wholly *consumed* as *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, and a great expression of his kindness, *the Inhabitants saved*, as *firebrands pluckt out of the burning*: O let it never be said that the last part of the words is fulfilled too, *Yet have ye not returned unto me, &c.* which, that it may not be, I shall first consider *the severity of God in his judgment* this day and then discover *the mixture of his kindness with it*, and the result of both will be the *unreasonableness of obstinate disobedience* after them.

1. *The severity of the judgment* here expressed: which, though we take it not

in reference to the persons of men, but to the Cities wherein they dwelt : as it seems to be understood not only by the *Original* wherein the words relating to persons are left out ; but by the following clause, expressing their preservation : yet we shall find the Judgment to be severe enough, in regard, 1. Of the *nature and kind* of it. 2. The *series and order* of it. 3. The *causes* moving to it. 4. The *Author* of it. *I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew, &c.*

1. *The nature and kind of it* : We can imagine nothing more severe when we consider what it is set forth by, the most unparrallel'd Judgment we read of, *viz.* the *destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah* by a fire from Heaven. Although in all circumstances the instance might not come up to the parallel, yet in several respects there might be so sad a desolation, that any other example but that might fall beneath the greatness and severity of it. And we may better understand of how sad and dreadful a nature such a Judgment must be, if we consider it with relation to the *suddenness and unexpectedness* of it, to the *force and violence* of it, and to all that *sad train of circumstances* which attend and follow it.

I. *The*

1. *The suddenness and unexpectedness of it; as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, i. e. when they least of all looked for such a desolation. For thus it was in the days of Lot (as our Saviour tells us) (a) (a) I uke. 17. 28, 26. they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from Heaven, and destroyed them all. They were all immersed either in their pleasures or in their business, they little thought of destruction being so near them as it proved to be: Thus it was with the Jews in their first and latter destruction both of their City and Country, they were as high and as confident of the contrary, as might be to the very last; nothing could perswade them that their Temple or their City should be burnt with Fire; till they saw them flaming before their eyes. Thus Josephus observes of his Countrymen, that in the midst of all their miseries they had no kind of sense at all of their sins, but were as proud, presumptuous and arrogant, as if all things went well with them; and were like to do so. They thought God could not possibly punish such a people as they were in such a manner; they could easily have believed it of any other people but themselves: but that God should punish his own people in*
Covenant

Hy ὁ δὲ ἀν-
 τὶς μετα-
 νῆα μὴ ἔ-
 δούα. ἦν
 ἡ ἀνὴρ, ἀ-
 λαζονεία
 ὅτι ὡς ἐπὶ
 ἀγαθῶν.
 de bell.
 Jud. 1.7. c.
 14.

Covenant with him, that Judgment should begin at the house of *God*, that they who had loved to be called by his Name, should be made examples to all other Nations; this seemed so harsh and incredible that by no means could they entertain it. But *God* and wise men too thought otherwise of them than they did of themselves: they could not but see an outward shew of Religion joyned with a deep and subtil hypocrisie; there being among them an heap of pride and luxury, of fraud and injustice, of sedition and faction gilded over with a fair shew of greater zeal for *God* and his *Glory*: which that impartial Historian (as one who knew them well) hath described at large: and although they could not believe that such heavy Judgments should befall them, yet others did not only *believe*, but *tremble* at the apprehensions of them.

Who among all the Citizens of *London* could have been perswaded, but the day before the *Fire* brake out, nay when they saw the *Flames* for near a day together, that ever in four days time, not a fourth part of the City should be left standing? For when were they ever more secure and inapprehensive of their danger than at this time? they had not been long returned
to

to their Houses, which the *Plague* had driven them from, and now they hoped to make some amends for the loss of their Trade before ; but they returned home with the same sins they carried away with them ; like new *Moons*, they had a new face and appearance, but the same *spots* remained still : or it may be, increased by that *scum* they had gathered in the Countries where they had been. Like Beasts of prey that had been chained up so long till they were hunger-bitten, when they once got loose they ran with that violence and greediness to their ways of gain, as though nothing could ever satisfy them. But that which betrayed them to so much security, was their late deliverance from so sweeping a Judgment as the *Plague* had been to the City and Suburbs of it : they could by no means think, when they had all so lately escaped the *Grave*, that the City it self should be so near being buried in its own ruins ; that the *Fire* which had missed their blood, should seize upon their houses ; that there should be no other way to purge the infected air, but by the *Flames* of the whole City. Thus when the Mariners have newly escaped a wreck at Sea, the fears of which have a long time deprived

deprived them of their wonted rest, they think they may securely lye down and sleep, till it may be another storm overtake and sink them. We see then there is neither piety nor wisdom in so much security when a great danger is over, for for we know not but that very security it self may provoke God to send a greater. And no kind of Judgments are so dreadful and amazing, as those which come most unexpectedly upon men; for these betray the succours which reason offers, they in-fatuate mens councils, weaken their courage, and deprive them of that presence of mind which is necessary at such a time for their own and the publick interest. And there needs no more to let us know how severe such a Judgment must be, when it comes upon men in so sudden and unexpected a manner; but that is not all, for the severity of it lies further,

2. *In the force and violence of it*: and surely that was very great which consumed four Cities to nothing in so short a time, when God did *pluere Gehennam de Cælo*, as one expresses it, rained down *Hell-fire* upon Sodom and Gomorrah. And this is that which some think is called

(a) Jude 7. *the (a) vengeance of eternal fire, which all those*

those in Sodom and Gomorrah are said to suffer; i. e. a Fire which consumed, till there was nothing left to be consumed by it. Not but that those wicked persons did justly suffer the *vengeance of an eternal fire* in another life, but the *Apostle* seems to set out and paint forth to us that in the life to come, by the force and violence of that *fire* which destroyed those Cities; and it would be harsh to say, that all who were involved in that common calamity (who yet were innocent as to the great abominations of those places, viz. the *Infants* there destroyed) must be immediately sentenced to eternal misery. But although *God* since that perpetual monument of his justice in the destruction of those Cities hath not by such an immediate fire from Heaven consumed and razed out the very foundations of other Cities; yet at sometimes there are *fires* which break out and rage with a more than ordinary violence, and will not yield to those attempts for quenching them, which at other times may be attended with great success. Such might that great fire in *Rome* be in *Nero's* time, which whether begun *casually*, or by *design* (which was disputed then, as it hath been about others

(a) *Tacit.*
An. 15.

Τὸ τὸ π
τὸ κακὸν
ἐκ ἀνθρώ-
πων ἀλλὰ
δαίμονιον
ἔργον. Xi-
phil. in E-
pit. Dion.
in Tito. p.
227.

Ὅθεν καὶ τὸ πᾶν ἔρ-
γον ὁξείας αἰσῆς, πνευόν-
των κατ' ἐμείνης καίρου
καὶ τότε ἀνθρώπων, ὅτι
γνώμη θεῶν καὶ συνάμει
ἡρξάτο τε τὸ πῦρ καὶ
ἐπαύσατο. Herodian.
in Commod. hist. l. i.
p. 22. v. Xiphil. ad fin.
Commodi.

(b) *Niceph. l. 15. c. 21.*

others since) did presently spread it self with greater speed over the *Cirque* (as the (a) Historian tells us) than the *Wind* it self, and never left burning, till of fourteen *Regions* in *Rome*, but four were left entire. Such might that be in the *Emperor Titus* his time, which lasted three days and nights, and was so irresistible in its fury, that the Historian tells us, *it was certainly more than an ordinary fire*. Such might that be in the same City in the time of *Commodus*, which though all the art and industry imaginable were used for the quenching it, yet it burnt, till it had consumed besides the *Temple of Peace*, the fairest Houses and Palaces of the City, which on that account, the *Historians* attribute to more than natural causes. Such

might that be (which comes the nearest of any I have met with, to that *Fire* we this day lament the effects of) I mean that at *Constantinople*, which happened (b) *A. D. 465.* in the beginning of *September*; it brake forth by the water side, and raged with that horrible fury for four days together, that it burnt down the greatest part

part of the City, and was so little capable of resistance that as (a) *Evagrius* (a) *Evagr.*
l. 2. cap. 13. tells us, the strongest Houses were but *ὡς πρὸς τὴν ξερρανῶδες*, like so much dried stubble before it; by which means the whole City was, as he calls it, *ὁκνηρότατον θέαμα*, a most miserable and dolefull spectacle; so that as (b) *Baronius* (b) *Baron.*
Torn. 5. A.
465. 1. expresses it, that City which before was accounted the wonder of the world, was made like unto Sodom and Gomorrah. Such likewise might those two great Fires have been which have formerly burnt down great part of the then City of London; but neither of them come near to the dreadfulnes of this, considering how much bigger the habitations of the City were now, and how much greater the riches of it than could be imagined at those times. How great must we conceive the force of this Fire to have been, which having at first gotten a head where there was little means of resisting it, and much fuel to increase it; from thence it spread it self both with and against the wind; till it had gained so considerable a force, that it despised all the resistance could be made by the strength of the buildings which stood in its way; and when it had once subdued the strongest and

and the tallest of them, it then roared like the waves of the Sea, and made its way through all the lesser obstacles, and might have gone on so far, till it had laid this *City* level with the ruins of the other, had not he who sets the bounds to the *Ocean*, and saith, *Thus far shalt thou go and no farther*, put a stop to it in those places which were as ready to have yielded up themselves to the rage of it, as any which had been consumed before.

3. The severity of it will yet more appear from all *the dreadfull circumstances which attend and follow it*. Could you suppose your selves in the midst of those *Cities* which were consumed by *Fire* from Heaven, when it had seized upon their dwellings, O what cries and lamentations, what yellings and shriekings might ye then have heard among them! We may well think how dreadfull those were, when we do but consider how sad the circumstances were of the *Fire* we mourn for this day. When it began like *Sampson* to break in pieces all the means of resisting it, and carried before it not only the *Gates*, but the *Churches* and most *magnificent Structures* of the *City*, what horror and confusion may we then

then imagine had seized upon the spirits of the *Citizens*; what distraction in their Councils, what paleness in their Countenances, what pantings at their Hearts, what an universal consternation might have been then seen upon the Minds of men? But O the sighs and tears, the frights and amaze-ments, the miscarriages, nay the deaths of some of the weaker Sex at the terror and apprehension of it! O the hurry and useless pains, the alarms and tumults, the mutual hinderances of each other that were among men at the beholding the rage and fury of it! There we might have seen Women weeping for their Children, for fear of their being trod down in the press, or lost in the crowd of people, or exposed to the violence of the flames; Husbands more solicitous for the safety of their Wives and Children, than their own; the Soldiers running to their Swords, when there was more need of Buckets; the Tradesmen loading their backs with that which had gotten possession of their hearts before. Then we might have heard some complaining thus of themselves: O that I had been as carefull of laying up treasures in Heaven, as I have been upon Earth, I had

not been under such fears of losing them as now I am! If I had served *God* as faithfully as I have done the world, he would never have left me as now that is like to do. What a fool have I been which have spent all my precious time for the gaining of that which may now be lost in an hours time! If these flames be so dreadful, what are those which are reserved for them who love the world more than *God*! If none can come near the heat of this *Fire*, who can dwell with *everlasting burnings*! O what madness then will it be to sin any more wilfully against that *God* who is a *consuming fire*, infinitely more dreadful than this can be! Farewel then all ye deceitful vanities: now I understand thee and my self better, O bewitching world, than to fix my happiness in thee any more. I will henceforth learn so much wisdom to lay up my treasures there where neither moths can corrupt them, nor Thieves steal them, nor fire consume them. O how happy would *London* be, if this were the effect of her flames on the minds of all her Inhabitants! She might then rise with a greater glory, and her inward beauty would outshine her outward splendour, let it be as great as we can wish or imagine.

But

But in the mean time who can behold her present ruines, without paying some tears as due to the sadness of the spectacle, and more to the sins which caused them? If that City were able to speak out of its ruines, what sad complaints would it make of all those impieties which have made her so miserable. If it had not been (might she say) for the pride and luxury, the ease and delicacy of some of my Inhabitants, the covetousness, the fraud, the injustice of others, the debaucheries of the prophane, the open factions and secret hypocrisie of too many pretending to greater sanctity, my *beauty* had not been thus *turned into ashes*, nor my glory into those ruines which make my enemies rejoyce, my friends to mourn, and all stand amazed at the beholding of them. Look now upon me, you who solately admired the greatness of my Trade, the riches of my Merchants, the number of my People, the conveniency of my Churches, the multitude of my Streets, and see what desolations sin hath made in the earth. Look upon me, and then tell me whether it be nothing to dally with Heaven, to make a mock at sin, to slight the judgments of *God*, and abuse his mercies, and after all the attempts of Heaven to reclaim

a people from their sins, to remain still the same that ever they were? Was there no way to expiate your guilt but by my misery? Had the *Leprosie* of your sins so fretted in my Walls, that there was no cleansing them, but by the flames which consume them? Must I mourn in *my dust and ashes* for your iniquities, while you are so ready to return to the practice of them? Have I suffered so much by reason of *them*, and do you think to escape yourselves? Can you then look upon my ruins with hearts as hard and unconcerned as the *stones* which lye in them? If you have any kindness for me, or for yourselves; if you ever hope to see my breaches repaired, my beauty restored, my glory advanced, look on *Londons* ruins and *repent*. Thus would she bid her Inhabitants not weep for her miseries, but for their own sins; for if *never any sorrow was like to her sorrow*, it is because never any sins were like to their sins. Not as though they were only the sins of the City, which have brought this evil upon her, no, but as far as the judgment reaches, so great hath the compass of the sins been, which have provoked *God* to make her an example of his justice. And I fear the effects of *Londons* calamity will be felt
all

all the Nation over. For, considering the present languishing condition of this Nation, it will be no easie matter to recover the *blood* and *spirits* which have been lost by this *Fire*. So that whether we consider the sadness of those circumstances which accompanied the rage of the fire, or those which respect the present miseries of the City, or the general influence those will have upon the Nation, we cannot easily conceive what judgment could in so *critical* a time have befallen us, which had been more severe for the *kind* and *nature* of it, than this hath been.

2. We consider it *in the series and order of it*. We see by the *Text*, this comes in the last place, as a reserve, when nothing else would do any good upon them:

It is *extrema medicina*, as (a) St. Hieron, saith, the last attempt that God uses to reclaim a people by, and if these *Causticks* will not do, it is to be feared he looks upon the wounds as incurable. He had sent a *famine* before, v. 6. a *drought*, v. 7, 8. *blasting and mildew*, v. 9. the *Pestilence* after the manner of Egypt, v. 10. the *miseries of War*, in the same verse. And when none of these would work that effect upon them, which they were de-

(a) Hieron
in loc.

signed for, then he comes to this last way of punishing before a final destruction, *he overthrew some of their Cities as he had overthrown Sodom and Gomorrah.* God forbid, we should be so near a final subversion, and utter desolation, as the ten Tribes were, when none of these things would bring them to repentance; but yet the method God hath used with us seems to bode very ill in case we do not at last *return to the Lord.* For it is not only agreeable to what is here delivered as the course God used to reclaim the *Israelites*, but to what is reported by the most faithful *Historian* of those times of the degrees and steps that God made before the ruins of the *British Nation.* For (a) *Gildas* tells us the decay of it began by *Civil Wars* among themselves, and *high discontents* remaining as the consequents of them; after this an *universal decay and poverty* among them; after that, nay during the continuance of it, *Wars* with the *Picts* and *Scots* their inveterate enemies; but no sooner had they a little breathing space, but they return to their luxury and other sins again; then God sends among them a *consuming Pestilence*, which destroyed an incredible number of people. When all this would not do, those whom they trusted

(a) *Gildas*
de Excid.
Brit.

trusted most to, betrayed them, and rebelled against them, by whose means, not only *the Cities were burnt with Fire*, but the whole *Island* was turned almost into *one continued flame*. The issue of all which at last was, that their *Country* was turned to a desolation, the ancient *Inhabitants* driven out, or destroyed, and their former servants, but now their bitter enemies, possessing their *habitations*. May God avert the *Omen* from us at this day. We have smarted by *Civil wars*, and the dreadful effects of them; we yet complain of *great discontents* and *poverty* as great as them, we have *inveterate enemies* combined abroad against us, we have very lately suffered under a *Pestilence* as great almost as any we read of, and now the *great City* of our *Nation* burnt down by a *dreadful Fire*. And what do all these things mean? and what will the issue of them be? though that be locked up in the *Councils of Heaven*, yet we have just cause to fear, if it be not our speedy amendment, it may be our ruine. And they who think that incredible, let them tell me whether two years since, they did not think it altogether as improbable, that in the compass of the two succeeding years, above a *hundred thousand persons* should be destroyed by the *Plague* in *London* and



other places, and the City it self should be burnt to the Ground? And if our fears do not, I am sure our sins may tell us, that these are but the fore-runners of greater calamities, in case there be not a timely reformation of our selves. And although God may give us some intermissions of punishments, yet at last he may, as the Roman Consul expressed it, pay us *intercalatæ pœnæ usuram*, that which may make amends for all his abatements, and give us full measure according to that of our sins, pressed down, shaken together, and running over. Which leads to the third particular.

3. *The Causes moving God to so much severity in his Judgements*, which are the greatness of the sins committed against him. So this Prophet tells us, that the true account of all Gods punishments is to be fetched from the sins of the people, Amos 1. 2. *For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four I will not turn away the punishment thereof*: so it is said of Gaza, v. 6. of Tyrus, v. 9. of Edom, v. 11. of Ammon, v. 13. Moab, ch. 2. 1. Judah, v. 4. And at last Israel, v. 6. And it is observable of every one of these, that when God threatens to punish them for the greatness of their iniquities, and the multitude of their transgressions, (which is generally supposed to be meant by the three transgressions

gressions and the four) he doth particularly threaten to send a fire among them to consume the Houses and the Palaces of their Cities. So to *Damascus*, chap. 1. 4. to *Gaza*, v. 7. to *Tyrus*, v. 10. to *Edom*, v. 12. to *Ammon*, v. 14. to *Moab*, ch. 2. v. 2. to *Judah*, v. 5. *I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the Palaces of Jerusalem* : and *Israel* in the words of the text. This is a Judgment then, which when it comes in its fury, gives us notice to how great a height our sins are risen : especially when it hath so many dreadful forerunners, as it had in *Israel*, and hath had among our selves. When the red horse hath marched furiously before it all bloody with the effects of a Civil War, and the pale horse hath followed after the other with Death upon his back, and the Grave at his heels, and after both these, those come, out of whose mouth issues fire, and smoak, and brimstone, it is then time for the inhabitants of the earth, to repent of the work of their hands. But it is our great unhappiness, that we are apt to impute these great calamities to any thing rather than to our sins ; and thereby we hinder our selves from the true remedy, because we will not understand the cause of our distemper. Though God hath not sent Prophets among us, to tell us for such
and

and such sins, I will send such and such judgments upon you, yet where we observe the parallel between the *sins* and the *punishments* agreeable with what we find recorded in *Scripture*, we have reason to say, that those sins were not only the *antecedents*, but the *causes* of those punishments which followed after them. And that because the reason of punishment was not built upon any particular relation between *God* and the people of *Israel*, but upon reasons common to all mankind : yet with this difference, that the greater the mercies were which any people enjoyed, the sooner was the measure of their iniquities filled up, and the severer were the judgements when they came upon them. This our *Prophet* gives an account of, Chap. 3. 2. *You only have I known of all the Nations of the earth, therefore will I punish you for your iniquities.* So did *God* punish *Tyre* and *Damascus*, as well as *Israel* and *Judah*; but his meaning is, he would punish them sooner, he would punish them more severely. I wish we could be brought once to consider what influence *piety* and *virtue* hath upon the good of a Nation, if we did, we should not only live better our selves, but our *Kingdom* and *Nation* might flourish more than

than otherwise we are like to see it do. Which is a truth hath been so universally received among the wise Men of all ages, that one of the *Roman Historians*, though of no very severe life himself, yet imputes the decay of the *Roman State*, not to Chance or Fortune, or some unhidden causes (which the *Atheism* of our Age would presently do) but to the general looseness of mens lives, and corruption of their manners. And it was the grave Observation of one of the bravest (a) *Cap-* (a) Scipio
apud Aug
de Civ. D.
l. 1. c. 33.
tains ever the *Roman State* had, that it was impossible for any State to be happy, *stantibus mœnibus, ruentibus moribus*, though their walls were firm, if their manners were decayed. But it is our misery, that our walls and our manners are fallen together, or rather the latter undermined the former. They are our *sins* which have drawn so much of our blood, and infected our air, and added the greatest fuel to our flames.

But it is not enough in general to declaim against our *sins*, but we must search out particularly those predominant vices, which by their *boldness* and *frequency* have provoked God thus to punish us; and as we have hitherto observed a parallel between the *Judgments* of *Israel* in this Chapter,

Chapter, and our own: So I am afraid we shall find too sad a parallel between *their sins* and *ours* too. Three sorts of *sins* are here spoken of in a peculiar manner, as the causes of their severe punishments: Their *luxury and intemperance*, their *covetousness and oppression*, and *their contempt of God and his Laws*, and I doubt we need not make a very exact scrutiny to find out these in a high degree among our selves: and I wish it were as easie to reform them, as to find them out.

1. *Luxury and intemperance*; that we meet with in the first verse, both in the compellation, *Ye Kine of Bashan*, and in their behaviour, *which say to their Masters, bring and let us drink. Ye Kine of Bashan, Loquitur ad Principes Israel & Optimates quosque decem Tribuum*, saith St. Hierom, he speaks to the *Princes of Israel, and the chief of all the ten Tribes*; Those which are fed in the richest pastures, such as those of *Bashan* were. Who are more fully described by the Prophet in this sixth chapter. They are the men *who are at ease in Sion, v. 1. they put far away from them the evil day, v. 3. they lye upon beds of Ivory, and stretch themselves upon their Couches, and eat the Lambs out of the flock, and the Calves out of the midst*

*midst of the stall, v. 4. they chaunt to the sound of the Viol, and invent to themselves instruments of Musick like David, v. 5. they drink Wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments, but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. The meaning of all which is, they minded nothing but ease, softness, and pleasure, but could not endure to hear of the calamities which were so near them. Nothing but mirth, and jollity, and riot, and feasting, and evil consequences of these were to be seen or heard among them. Their delicate souls were presently ruffled and disturbed at the discourse of any thing but matters of courtship, address and entertainment. Any thing that was grave and serious, though never so necessary, and of the greatest importance, was put off, as *Felix* put off *St. Paul*, to a more convenient time: especially if it threatened miseries to them, and appeared with a countenance sadder than their own. These were the *Kine of Bashan*, who were full of ease and wantonness, and never thought of the *day of slaughter*, which the other were the certain fore-runner of. *Symmachus* renders it, *ai Bles euteceoi*, which others apply to *the rich Citizens of Samaria*; I am afraid we may take it in either sense*

sense without a *Salacism*. Bring and let us drink, which as St. Hieron goes on, *Ebrietatem significat in vino & luxuria quæ statum mentis evertunt*, it implies the height of their *luxury* and *intemperance*. It is observed by some, that our Prophet retains still the language of his education in the bluntness of his expressions, the great men that lived wholly at their ease, in wantonness and luxury, he styles like the *heardsman of Tekoa*, the *Kine of Bashan*. That he thought was title good enough for such who seemed to have souls for no other end, than the other had. And hath not that *delicata insania*, as St. Austin calls it, that soft and effeminate kind of madness taken possession of too many among us, whose birth and education designed them for more manly employments? Yea, what an age of *Luxury* do we live in, when instead of those noble characters of men from their virtue, and wisdom, and courage, it is looked on among some as a mighty character of a person, that he *eats and drinks well*: a character that becomes none so much as the *Kine of Bashan* in the literal sense, for surely they did so, or else they had never been in so great esteem among the *heardsmen of Tekoa*. A character which those *Philosophers*

phers would have been ashamed of, who looked upon no other end of humane life but *pleasure*; But in order to that, they thought nothing more necessary than *temperance* and *sobriety*; but whatever esteem they had then, they have lost all their reputation among our modern *Epicures*, who know of no such things as *pleasures of the mind*, and would not much value whether they had any *faculties* of the *mind* or no, unless it were for the contrivance of new Oaths and Debaucheries. But if this were only among some few persons, we hope the whole Nation would not suffer for their madness: for scarce any Age hath been so happy, but it hath had some *Monsters* in *Morality* as well as *Nature*. But I am afraid these vices are grown too *Epidemical*; not only in the *City*, but the *Countries* too; what mean else those frequent complaints (and I hope more general than the causes of them) that the houses of *great men* in too many places are so near being *publick schools of debauchery*, rather than of *piety* and *virtue*, where men shall not want instructors to teach them to forget both *God* and *themselves*; wherein *sobriety* is so far from being accounted a matter of *honour*, that the rules of the *Persian* civility are quite forgotten,

forgotten, and *men* are forced to *unman* themselves. I know nothing would tend more to the honour of our Nation, or the advantage of it, than if once these publick excesses were severely restrained, I do not mean so much by making new *Laws*, (for those generally do but exercise peoples Wits by finding out new evasions) but by executing old ones.

2. *Covetousness and oppression*. You see what these great men in *Samarra* did when they had any respite from their excesses and intemperance, then woe be to the poor who come in their way; *Which oppress the poor, and crush the needy*: v. 1. either by the hands of violence, or by those arts and devices which either their honesty or poverty have kept them from the knowledge of. And if there be not so much of open violence in our daies, the thanks are due to the care of our *Magistrates*, and the severity of our *Laws*, but it is hard to say whether ever any Age produced more studious and skilful to pervert the design of *Laws*, without breaking the letter of them, than this of ours hath done. Fraud and injustice is now managed with a great deal of artifice and cunning; and he thinks himself no body in the understanding of the world, that

that cannot overreach his Brother, and not be discovered: or however in the multiplicity and obscurity of our *Laws* cannot find out something in pretence at least to justify his actions by. But if appeal be made to the *Court of Judicature*, what arts are then used either for concealing or hiring Witnesses, so that if their Purse be not equal, the adverse party may overswear him by so much as his Purse is weightier than the others. I heartily wish it may never be said of us, what the *Orator* once said of the *Greeks*, (a) *Quibus jusjurandum jocus, testimonium* (a) *Cicer. pro Flacco.* *ludus*, they made it a matter of jest and drollery to forswear themselves, and give false testimonies. But supposing men keep within the bounds of justice and common honesty, yet how unsatiable are the desires of men! they are for adding *house to house*, and *land to land* never contented with what either their Ancestors have left them, or the bountiful hand of Heaven hath bestowed upon them. Till at last it may be in the *Prophets* expression for their covetousness, (b) *the stone cry* (b) *Heb. 2.* *out of the wall, and the beam out of the* 21. *timber answer it; i. e. provoke God to give a severe check to the exorbitant and boundless desire of men, as he hath done*

D by

by this days calamity. Thus while *the*
 (a) Isa. 47. *City* thought with (a) *Babylon* to sit as a
 7, 8, 11. *Lady* for ever, while she dwelt carelessly,
 and said *I am*, and there is none else beside
 me ; evil is come upon her, and she knows
 not from whence it comes, and mischief is
 fallen upon her, and she hath not been able
 to put it off, and desolation is come upon
 her suddenly, which she did not foresee.

3. *Contempt of God and his Laws.* That
 we read of v. 4. where the *Prophet* speaks
 by an *Irony* to them, *Come to Bethel and*
transgress, &c. he knew well enough they
 were resolved to do it, let *God* or the
Prophet say what they pleased. For these
Kine of Bashan were all for the *Calves* of
Dan and *Bethel*, and some think that is
 the reason of the title that is given them.
 These great men of *Samaria* thought it
 beneath them to own *Religion* any further
 than it was subservient to their civil in-
 terests. They were all of *Jeroboams Re-*
ligion, who looked on it as a mere *poli-*
tick thing, and fit to advance his own de-
 signs by. I am afraid there are too ma-
 ny at this day who are secretly of his
 mind, and think it a piece of *wisdom* to be
 so: *Blessed God*, that men should be so
 wise to deceive themselves, and go down
 with so much discretion to *Hell* ! These
 are

are the grave and retired *Atheists*, who, though they secretly love not *Religion*, yet their caution hinders them from talking much against it. But there is a sort of men much more common than the other ; the faculties of whose minds are so thin and airy, that they will not bear the consideration of any thing, much less of *Religion*; these throw out their bitter scoffs, and prophane jests against it. A thing never permitted that I know of in any civilized Nation in the world ; whatsoever their *Religion* was, the reputation of *Religion* was always preserved sacred : *God* himself (saith *Josephus*) would not suffer the *Jews* to speak evil of other *Gods*, though they were to destroy all those who tempted them to the worship of them. And shall we suffer the most excellent and reasonable *Religion* in the world, viz. the *Christian*, to be prophaned by the unhallowed mouths of any who will venture to be damned, to be accounted witty ? if their enquiries were deeper, their reason stronger, or their arguments more perswasive, than of those who have made it their utmost care and business to search into these things, they ought to be allowed a fair hearing ; but for men who pretend to none of these things, yet still to make *Religion* the object of their

scoffs and *raillery*, doth not become the gravity of a Nation professing wisdom to permit it, much less the sobriety of a people professing *Christianity*. In the mean time such persons may know, that wise men may be argued out of a *Religion* they own, but none but *Fools* and *madmen* will be *droll'd* out of it. Let them first try whether they can laugh men out of their Estates, before they attempt to do it out of their hopes of an Eternal happiness. And I am sure it will be no comfort to them in another world, that they were accounted *Wits* for deriding those miseries which they then feel and smart under the severity of: it will be no *mitigation* of their *flames* that they go *laughing* into them; nor will they endure them the better because they would not believe them. But while this is so prevailing a *humour* among the vain men of this Age and Nation, what can we expect but that God should be remarkable, and severe judgments seek to make men more serious in *Religion*; or else make their *hearts to ake*, and their *joints to tremble*, as he did *Belshazzars*, when he could find nothing else to carouse in but the *Vessels* of the *Temple*. And when men said in the Prophet *Zeph-*

(a) Zeph. ny, chap. 1. 12. that God neither did good
1. 13, 14, nor evil, presently it follows, (a) therefore
15. their

their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a desolation: the day of the Lord is near, a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wastness and desolation; as it is with us at this time. Thus we see how sad the parallel hath been not only in the judgments of Israel, but in the sins likewise which have made those judgments so severe.

4. The severity of the Judgment appears not only from the *Causes*, but from the *Author* of it. *I have overthrown some of you as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. God challenges the execution of his Justice to himself, not only in the great day, but in his judgment here in the world. (a) Shall there be evil in a City and the Lord hath not done it? When God is pleased to punish men for their sins, the execution of his justice is agreeable to his nature now, as it will be at the end of the world. We all know that he may do it if he please, and he hath told us, that he doth and will do it; and we know withal, that without such remarkable severities, the world will hardly be kept in any awe of him. We do not find that love doth so much in the World as Fear doth, there being so very few persons of tractable and ingenuous spirits.*

(a) *Lact.* 1. 2. c. 11. It is true of too many, what (a) *Lactantius* observes of the *Romans*, *Nunquam Dei meminerunt, nisi dum in malis sunt*, they seldom think of God, but when they are afraid of him. And there is not only this reason as to particular persons why God should punish them, but there is a greater as to Communities, and Bodies of men; for although God suffers wicked men to escape punishment here, as he often doth, yet he is sure not to do it in the life to come; but Communities of men can never be punished but in this World; and therefore the Justice of God doth often discover it self in these common calamities, to keep the World in subjection to him, and to let men see that neither the multitude of their Associates, nor the depth of their Designs, nor the subtilty of their Councils can secure them from the omnipotent arm of Divine Justice, when he hath determined to visit their transgressions with rods, and their iniquities with stripes. But when he doth all this, yet his loving kindness doth he not utterly take from them: for in the midst of all his Judgments he is pleased to remember Mercy; of which we have a remarkable instance in the Text, for when God was overthrowing Cities, yet he pluckt the Inhabitants

tants as fire brands out of the burning :
and so I come from the severity of God,

2. To the mixture of his Mercy in it.
And ye were as a fire-brand pluckt out of the burning. That notes two things, *the nearness they were in to the danger, and the unexpectedness of their deliverance out of it.*

1. *The nearness they were in to the danger, quasi torris, cujus jam magna pars absumpta est,* as some Paraphrase it; *like a brand, the greatest part of which is already consumed by Fire;* which shews the difficulty of their escaping. So *Joshua* is said to be a *brand pluckt out of the fire,* *Zech. 3. 2.* And to this *St. Hierom* upon this place, applies that difficult passage, *1 Cor. 3. 15. they shall be saved, but so as by Fire,* noting the greatness of the danger they were in, and how hardly they should escape. And are not all the Inhabitants of this City, and all of us in the Suburbs of the other, whose houses *escaped* so near the flames, as *Fire-brands pluckt out of the burning?* When the fire came on in its rage and fury, as though it would in a short time have devoured all before it, that not only this whole City, but so great a part of the Suburbs of the other should escape un-

untouched, is (all circumstances considered) a wonderful expression of the *kindness* of *God* to us in the midst of so much severity. If he had suffered the *Fire* to go on to have consumed the remainder of our *Churches* and *Houses*, and laid this City even with the other in one continued heap of *ruines*, we must have said, *Just art thou, O Lord, and righteous in all thy judgments.* We ought rather to have admired his *patience* in sparing us so long, than complain of this rigour of his Justice in punishing us at last; but instead of that he hath given us occasion this day, with the *three Children* in the *fiery Furnace*, to praise him in the midst of the *flames*. For even the *Inhabitants* of *London* themselves who have suffered most in this calamity, have cause to acknowledge the *mercy* of *God* towards them, that they are escaped themselves; though it be (as the *Jews* report of *Joshua* the *High-Priest*, when thrown into the fire by the *Chaldeans*) with *their cloaths burnt about them*. Though their habitations be consumed, and their losses otherwise may be too great, yet that in the midst of so much danger by the *flames*, and the press of people, so very few should suffer the loss of their *lives*,
ought

ought to be owned by them and us as a miraculous *Providence of God* towards them. And therefore *not unto us, not unto us, but to his holy Name be the praise of so great a preservation* in the midst of so heavy a Judgment.

2. *The unexpectedness of such a deliverance*; they are not saved by their own skill and counsel, nor by their strength and industry, but by him who by his mighty hand did *pluck them as fire-brands out of the burning*. Though we own the *justice of God* in the calamities of this day, let us not forget his *mercy* in what he hath unexpectedly rescued from the fury of the flames; that the *Royal Palaces* of our *Gracious Sovereign*, the *residence of the Nobility*, the *Houses of Parliament*, the *Courts of Judicature*, the place where we are now assembled, and several others of the same nature, with other places and habitations to receive those who were burnt out of their own, stand at this day untouched with the *fire* (and long may they continue so) ought chiefly to be ascribed to the *power and goodness* of that *God*, who not only commands the *raging of the Sea*, and the *madness of the People*, but whom the *winds and the flames* obey. Although
enough

enough in a due subordination to *Divine Providence* can never be attributed to the mighty care and industry of our most *Gracious Sovereign*, and his *Royal Highness*, who by their presence and encouragement inspired a new *life* and *vigour* into the sinking spirits of the *Citizens*, whereby *God* was pleased so far to succeed their endeavours, that a stop was put to the fury of the fire in such places where it was as likely to have prevailed, as in any parts of the *City* consumed by it.

O let us not then frustrate the design of so much severity mixed with so great mercy : let it never be said, that neither Judgments nor Kindness will work upon us : that neither our deliverance from the *Pestilence* which *walks in darkness*, nor from the *flames* which shine as the *noon-day*, will awaken us from that *Lethargy* and security we are in by our sins : but let *God* take what course he pleases with us, we are the same incorrigible people still that ever we were. For we have cause enough for our mourning and lamentation this day, (if *God* had not sent new calamities upon us) that we were no better for those we had undergone before. We have surfeited with
mercies

mercies, and grown sick of the kindness of Heaven to us, and when *God* hath made us smart for our fulness and wantonness, then we grew sullen and murmured and disputed against providence, and were willing to do any thing but repent of our sins, and reform our lives. It is not many years since *God* blessed us with great and undeserved blessings, which we then thought our selves very thankful for; but if we had been really so, we should never have provoked him who bestowed those favours upon us in so great a degree as we have done since. Was this our requital to *him* for restoring our *Sovereign*, to *rebel* the more against Heaven? Was this our thankfulness, for removing the *disorders* of *Church* and *State*, to bring them into our *lives*? Had we no other way of trying the continuance of *Gods goodness* to us, but by exercising his patience by our greater provocations? As though we had resolved to let the world see, there could be a more unthankful and disobedient people than the *Jews* had been. Thus we sinned with as much security and confidence, as though we had blinded the eyes, or bribed the justice, or commanded the power of Heaven. When *God* of a sudden

sudden like one highly provoked drew forth the sword of his destroying *Angel*, and by it cut off so many thousands in the midst of us : Then we fell upon our knees, and begg'd the mercy of Heaven, that our lives might be spared, that we might have time to amend them : but no looner did our fears abate, but our devotion did so too, we had soon forgotten the promises we made in the day of our distress, and I am afraid it is at this day too true of us which is said in the *Revelations* of those who had escaped the several plagues which so many had been destroyed by. (a) *And the rest of the men which were not killed by these Plagues, yet repented not of the work of their hands.* For if we had not greedily suckt in again the poyson we had only laid down while we were begging for our lives, if we had not returned with as great fury and violence as ever to our former lusts, the removing of one Judgment had not been as it were only to make way for the coming on of another. For the *grave* seemed to close up her mouth, and *death* by degrees to withdraw himself, that the *Fire* might come upon the *Stage*, to act its part too in the *Tragedy* our sins have made among us :

(a) Rev. 9.
20.

us : and I pray *God* this may be the last *Act* of it. Let us not then provoke *God* to find out new methods of vengeance, and make experiments upon us of what other unheard of severities may do for our cure. But let us rather meet *God* now by our repentance, and returning to him, by our serious humiliation for our former sins, and our steadfast resolutions to return no more to the practice of them. That, that much more dangerous *infection* of our souls may be cured as well as that of our bodies, that the impure *flames* which burn within may be extinguished, that all our *luxuries* may be retrenched, our debaucheries punished, our vanities taken away, our careless indifferency in Religion turned into a greater seriousness both in the profession and the practice of it. So will *God* make us a happy and prosperous, when he finds us a more righteous and holy Nation. So will *God* succeed all your endeavours for the honour and interest of that people whom you represent. So may he add that other Title to the rest of those you have deserved for your Countries good, to make you *Repairers of the breaches of the City* as well as of the *Nation*, and *Restorers of paths to dwell in*:

in : So may that *City* which now sits solitary like a *Widow*, have her tears wiped off, and her beauty and comeliness restored unto her. Yea, so may her present ruines, in which she now lies *buried*, be only the fore-runners of a more joyful *resurrection*. In which, though the *body* may remain the *same*, the *qualities* may be so altered, that its present desolation may be the only putting off its former inconveniences, weakness, and deformities, that it may rise with greater glory, strength and proportion : and to all her other qualities, may that of *incorruption* be added too, at least till the general Conflagration. And I know your great *Wisdom* and *Justice* will take care, that those who have suffered by the ruines, may not likewise suffer by the rising of it, that the glory of the *City* may not be laid upon the *tears* of the *Orphans* and *Widows*, but that its foundations may be settled upon Justice and Piety. That there be no complaining in the Streets for want of Righteousness, nor in the *City* for want of *Churches*, nor in the *Churches* for want of a settled maintenance. That those who attend upon the service of *God* in them may never be tempted
to

to betray their Consciences to gain a livelihood, nor to comply with the factious humours of men, that they may be able to live among them. And thus when the City through the blessing of Heaven shall be built again, may it be a Habitation of *Holiness* towards God, of *Loyalty* towards our *Gracious King* and his *Successors*, of *Justice* and *Righteousness* towards Men, of *Sobriety*, and *Peace*, and *Unity* among all the *Inhabitants*, till not Cities and Countries only, but the world and time it self shall be no more. Which *God* of his infinite mercy grant through the merits and mediation of his *Son*, to whom with the *Father* and *Eternal Spirit*, be all Honour and Glory for evermore.

SERMON II.

Preached before the

KING,

MARCH 13. 166⁶₇.

Prov. XIV. IX.

Fools make a mock at Sin.

WHEN *God* by his infinite Wisdom had contrived, and by a Power and Goodness, as infinite as his Wisdom, had perfected the the creation of the visible world, there seemed to be nothing wanting to the glory of it, but a creature endued with reason and understanding, which might comprehend the design of his wisdom, enjoy the benefits of his goodness, and employ it self in the celebration of his power. The Beings purely intellectual were

I. were too highly raised by their own order and creation, to be the *Lords* of this inferiour world : and those whose natures could reach no higher than the objects of sense, were not capable of discovering the glorious perfections of the great Creator : and therefore could not be the fit *Instruments* of his praise and service. But a conjunction of both these together was thought necessary to make up such a sort of Being, which might at once command this lower world, and be the servants of him who made it. Not as though this great fabrick of the world were merely raised for man to to please his fancy in the contemplation of it, or to exercise his dominion over the creatures designed for his use and service : but that by frequent reflections on the Author of his being, and the effects of his power and goodness he might be brought to the greatest love and admiration of him. So that the most natural part of *Religion* lies in the grateful acknowledgements we owe to that excellent and supream Being, who hath shewed so particular a kindness to man in the Creation and Government of the world. Which was so great and unexpressible, that some have thought, it was not so
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much pride and affectation of a greater height, as envy at the felicity and power of mankind, which was the occasion of the fall of the *Apostate spirits*. But whether or no the state of man were occasion enough for the envy of the *Spirits* above ; we are sure the kindness of Heaven was so great in it, as could not but lay an indispensable obligation on all mankind to perpetual gratitude and obedience. For it is as easie to suppose, that affronts and injuries are the most suitable returns for the most obliging favours, that the first duty of a *Child* should be to destroy his Parents ; that to be thankful for kindnesses received, were to commit the unpardonable sin ; as that man should receive his being and all the the blessings which attend it from *God*, and not be bound to the most universal obedience to him.

And as the reflection on the Author of his being, leads him to the acknowledgment of his duty towards *God*, so the consideration of the design of it, will more easily acquaint him with the nature of that duty which is expected from him. Had man been designed only to act a short part here in the world, all that had been required of him, had

had been only to express his thankfulness to *God* for his being, and the comforts of it: the using all means for the due preservation of himself; the doing nothing beneath the dignity of humane nature, nothing injurious to those who were of the same nature with himself; but since he is designed for greater and nobler ends, and his present state is but a state of tryal, in order to future happiness and misery; the reason of good and evil is not to be taken merely from his present, but from the respect, which things have to that eternal state he is designed for. From whence it follows, that the differences of good and evil are rooted in the nature of our beings, and are the necessary consequents of our relation to *God*, and each other, and our expectations of a future life. And therefore according to these measures, the estimation of men in the world hath been while they did preserve any veneration for *God* or *themselves*. Wisdom and folly was not measured so much by the subtilty and and curiosity of mens speculations, by the fineness of their thoughts, or the depth of their designs, as by their endeavours to hold up the dignity of mankind; by their piety and devotion towards

God ; by their sobriety and due Government of their actions ; by the equality and justice, the charity and kindness of their dealings to one another. Wisdom was but another name for goodness, and folly for sin ; then it was a mans glory to be religious ; and to be prophane and vitious, was to be base and mean : then there were no *Gods* worshipped because they were bad, nor any men disgraced because they were good. Then there were no *Temples* erected to the meanest passions of humane nature, nor men became *Idolaters* to their own infirmities. Then to be betrayed into sin, was accounted weakness ; to contrive it, dishonour and baseness ; to justify and defend it, infamy and reproach ; to make a mock at it, a mark of the highest folly and incorrigibleness. So the Wise man in the words of the Text assures us, that they are *Fools*, and those of the highest rank and degree of folly, *who make a mock at sin.*

It is well for us in the Age we live in, that we have the judgment of former ages to appeal to, and of those persons in them whose reputation for wisdom is yet unquestionable. For otherwise we might be born down by that spiteful enemy to all vertue and goodness, the impudence

dence of such, who it is hard to say, whether they shew it more in committing sin, or in defending it. Men whose manners are so bad, that scarce any thing can be imagined worse, unless it be the wit they use to excuse them with. Such who take the measure of mans perfections downwards, and the nearer they approach to beasts, the more they think themselves to act like men. No wonder then, if among such as these the differences of good and evil be laughed at, and no sin be thought so unpardonable, as the thinking that there is any at all. Nay, the utmost they will allow in the description of Sin, is, that it is a thing that some live by declaiming against, and others cannot live without the practice of.

But is the *Chair of Scorners* at last proved the only chair of Infallibility? Must those be the standard of mankind, who seem to have little left of humane nature, but laughter and the shape of men? Do they think that we are all become such fools to take scoffs for arguments, and raillery for demonstrations? He knows nothing at all of goodness, that knows not that it is much more easie to laugh at it, than to practise it; and it were worth the while *to make a mock at sin*, if the doing so would make nothing of it. But the

nature of things does not vary with the humours of men ; sin becomes not at all the less dangerous because men have so little Wit to think it so ; nor *Religion* the less excellent and adantagious to the world, because the greatest enemies of that are so much to themselves too , that they have learnt to despise it. But although that scorns to be defended by such weapons whereby her enemies assault her, (nothing more unbecoming the *Majesty of Religion*, than to make it self cheap, by making others laugh) yet if they can but obtain so much of themselves to attend with patience to what is serious, there may be yet a possibility of perswading them, that no *fools* are so great as those who laugh themselves into misery, and none so certainly do so, as those *who make a mock at sin.*

But if our authority be too mean and contemptible to be relied on, in a matter wherein they think us so much concerned (and so I hope we are to prevent the ruine of mens souls) we dare with confidence appeal to the general sense of mankind in the matter of our present debate. Let them name but any one person in all the monuments of former ages, to whom but the bare suspicion of Vice was not a diminution to an esteem that might

might otherwise have been great in the world. And if the bare suspicion would do so much among even the more rude and barbarous Nations, what would open and professed wickedness do among the more knowing and civil? Humane nature retains an abhorrency of sin, so far that it is impossible for men to have the same esteem of those who are given over to all manner of wickedness, though otherwise of great sharpness of wit, and of such whose natural abilities may not exceed the other, but yet do govern their actions according to the strict rules of *Religion* and *Vertue*. And the general sense of mankind cannot be by any thing better known, than by an universal consent of men, as to the ways whereby they express their value and esteem of others. What they all agree on as the best character of a person worthy to be loved and honoured, we may well think is the most agreeable to humane nature; and what is universally thought a disparagement to the highest accomplishments, ought to be looked on as the disgrace and imperfection of it. Did ever any yet, though never so wicked and profane themselves, seriously commend another person for his rudeness and debaucheries? Was any mans lust or intempe-

rance ever reckoned among the Titles of his honour? Who ever yet raised *Trophies* to his vices, or thought to perpetuate his memory by the glory of them? Where was it ever known, that sobriety and temperance, justice and charity were thought the marks of reproach and infamy? Who ever suffered in their reputation by being thought to be really good? Nay, it is so far from it, that the most wicked persons do inwardly esteem them whether they will or no. By which we see, that even in this lapsed and degenerate condition of mankind, it is only goodness which gains true honour and esteem, and nothing doth so effectually blast a growing reputation, as wickedness and vice.

But if it be thus with the generality of men, who were never yet thought to have too much partiality towards goodness, we may much more easily find it among those, who have had a better ground for the reputation of their wisdom, than the meer vogue of the people. He who was pronounced by the *Heathen Oracle*, to be the wisest among the *Greeks*, was the person who brought down Philosophy from the obscure and uncertain speculations of Nature, and in all his discourses recommended Vertue as the truest Wisdom.

Wisdom. And he among the Jews, whose
 (a) *soul was as large as the sand on the Sea-* (a) 1 Kin.
shore, whose wisdom out-went that of all the 4th 29, 30,
persons of his own or future Ages, writes a 31.
 Book on purpose to perswade men, that
 there is no real wisdom, but to fear God
 and keep his Commandments : that sin
 is the greatest folly, and the meaner ap-
 prehensions men have of it, the more they
 are infatuated by the temptations to it.
 But as there are degrees of sinning, so
 there are of folly in it. Some sin with
 a blushing Countenance, and a trembling
 Conscience ; they sin, but yet they are
 afraid to sin, but in the act of it they con-
 demn themselves for what they do ; they
 sin, but with confusion in their faces,
 with horror in their minds, and an earth-
 quake in their Consciences : though the
 condition of such persons be dangerous,
 and their unquietness shews the greatness
 of their folly, yet because these twitches
 of Conscience argue there are some quick
 touches left of the sense of good and
 evil, their case is not desperate, nor
 their condition incurable : But there are
 others who despise these as the reproach
 of the *School of Wickedness*, because they
 are not yet attained to those heights of
 impiety which they glory in : such who
 have

have subdued their Consciences much easier than others do their sins; who have almost worn out all the impressions of the *work of the Law written in their hearts*; who not only make a practice, but a boast of sin, and defend it with as much greediness as they commit it: these are the men, whose folly is manifest to all men but themselves; and surely, since these are the men, whom *Solomon* in the words of the *Text* describes,

(1.) By their character, as *Fools*, and,

(2.) By the instance of their folly, *in making a mock at sin*; We may have not only the liberty to use, but (1.) To prove, that Name of reproach to be due unto them; and (2.) To shew the reasonableness of fastning it upon them, because they *make a mock at sin*.

But before I come more closely to pursue that, it will be necessary to consider another sense of these words caused by the ambiguity of the *Hebrew Verb*, which sometimes signifies to deride and scorn, sometimes to plead for, and excuse a thing with all the arts of *Rhetorick* (thence the word for *Rhetorick* is derived from the Verb here used) according to which sense, it notes all the plausible pretences

pretences and subtle extenuations which wicked men use in defence of their evil actions. For as if men intended to make some recompence for the folly they betray in the acts of sin, by the wit they employ in the pleading for them, there is nothing they shew more industry and care in, than in endeavouring to baffle their own Consciences, and please themselves in their folly, till death and eternal flames awaken them. That we may not therefore seem to beg all wicked men for *Fools*, till we have heard what they have to say for themselves, we shall first examine the reasonableness of their fairest Pleas for their evil actions, before we make good the particular impeachment of *folly* against them. There are three ways especially whereby they seek to justify themselves; by laying the blame of all their evil actions, either upon the fatal necessity of all events, the unavoidable frailty of humane nature, or the impossibility of keeping the Laws of Heaven: But that none of these will serve to excuse them from the just imputation of *folly*, is our present business to discover.

1. *The fatal necessity of all humane actions.*
Those who upon any other terms are unwilling

willing enough to own either *God* or *Providence*, yet if they can but make these serve their turn to justify their sins by, their quarrel against them then ceaseth, as being much more willing that *God* should bear the blame of their sins, than themselves. But yet the very fears of a *Deity* suggest so many dreadful thoughts of his *Majesty*, *Justice*, and *Power*, that they are very well contented to have him wholly left out : and then to suppose Man to be a meer Engine, that is necessarily moved by such a train and series of causes, that there is no action how bad soever that is done by him, which it was any more possible for him not to have done, than for the fire not to burn when it pleases. If this be true, farewell all the differences of good and evil in mens actions ; farewell all expectations of future rewards and punishments ; *Religion* becomes but a meer name, and righteousness but an art to live by. But it is with this, as it is with the other arguments they use against *Religion* ; there is something within, which checks and controlls them in what they say : and that inward remorse of Conscience, which such men sometimes feel in their evil actions (when conscience is forced to recoil

coil by the foulness of them) doth effectually confute their own *hypothesis*; and makes them not believe those actions to be necessary, for which they suffer so much in themselves because they knew they did them freely. Or it is as fatal for man to believe himself free when he is not so, as it is for him to act when his choice is determined? but what *series* of causes is there that doth so necessarily impose upon the common sense of all mankind; It seems very strange, that man should have so little sense of his own interest to be still necessitated to the worst of actions, and yet torment himself with the thoughts that he did them freely. Or is it only the *freedom of action*, and not of *choice*, that men have an experience of within themselves? But surely, however men may subtilly dispute of the difference between these two, no man would ever believe himself to be free in what he does, unless he first thought himself to be so, in what he determines? And if we suppose man to have as great a *freedom of choice* in all his evil actions (which is the liberty we are now speaking of) as any persons assert or contend for, we cannot suppose that he should have a greater experience of it, than now he hath.

hath. So that either it is impossible for man to know when his choice is free; or if it may be known, the constant experience of all evil men in the world will testify, that it is so now. Is it possible for the most intemperate person to believe, when the most pleasing temptations to lust or gluttony are presented to him, that no consideration whatever could restrain his appetite, or keep him from the satisfaction of his brutish inclinations? Will not the sudden, though groundless apprehension of poyson in the Cup, make the Drunkards heart to ake, and hand to tremble, and to let fall the supposed fatal mixture in the midst of all his jollity and excess? How often have persons who have designed the greatest mischief to the lives and fortunes of others, when all opportunities have fallen out beyond their expectation for accomplishing their ends, through some sudden thoughts which have surprized them, almost in the very act, been diverted from their intended purposes? Did ever any yet imagine that the charms of beauty and allurements of lust were so irresistible, that if men knew before-hand they should surely dye in the embraces of an adulterous bed, they could not yet withstand the

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the temptations to it ? If then some considerations, which are quite of another nature from all the objects which are presented to him, may quite hinder the force and efficacy of them upon the mind of man (as we see in *Joseph's* resisting the importunate Caresses of his Mistress) what reason can there be to imagine that man is a meer *machine* moved only as outward objects determine him ? And if the considerations of present fear and danger may divert men from the practice of evil actions, shall not the far more weighty considerations of eternity have at least an equal, if not a far greater power and efficacy upon mens minds, to keep them from everlasting misery ? Is an immortal soul and the eternal happiness of it so mean a thing in our esteem and value, that we will not deny ourselves those sensual pleasures for the sake of that which we would renounce for some present danger ? Are the flames of another world such painted fires, that they deserve only to be laughed at, and not seriously considered by us ? Fond man ! art thou only free to ruine and destroy thy self ? a strange fatality indeed, when nothing but what is mean and trivial shall determine thy choice ! when
matters

matters of the highest moment are therefore less regarded, because they are such. Hast thou no other plea for thy self, but that thy sins were fatal? thou hast no reason then to believe but that thy misery shall be so too. But if thou ownest a *God* and *Providence*, assure thy self that justice and righteousness are not meer *Titles* of his *Honour*, but the real properties of his nature. And he who hath appointed the rewards and punishments of the great day, will then call the sinner to account, not only for all his other sins, but for offering to lay the imputation of them upon himself. For if the greatest abhorrency of mens evil ways, the rigour of his laws, the severity of his judgments, the exactness of his justice, the greatest care used to reclaim men from their sins, and the highest assurance, that he is not the cause of their ruine, may be any vindication of the holiness of *God* now, and his justice in the life to come; we have the greatest reason to lay the blame of all our evil actions upon our selves, as to attribute the glory of all our good unto himself alone.

2. *The frailty of humane Nature*: those who find themselves to be free enough
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to do their souls mischief; and yet continue still in the doing of it, find nothing more ready to plead for themselves, than the unhappiness of mans composition, and the degenerate state of the world. If *God* had designed (they are ready to say) that man should lead a life free from sin, why did he confine the soul of man to a body so apt to taint and pollute it? But who art thou O man, that thus findest fault with thy Maker? Was not his kindness the greater, in not only giving thee a soul capable of enjoying himself, but such an habitation for it here, which by the curiosity of its contrivance, the number and usefulness of its parts, might be a perpetual and domestick testimony of the wisdom of its *Maker*? Was not such a conjunction of soul and body necessary for the exercise of that dominion which *God* designed man for, over the creatures endued only with sense and motion? And if we suppose this life to be a state of tryal in order to a better, (as in all reason we ought to do) what can be imagined more proper to such a state, than to have the soul constantly employed in the Government of those sensual inclinations which arise from the body? In the doing of which, the proper exercise

cise of that vertue consists, which is made the condition of future happiness. Had it not been for such a composition, the difference could never have been seen between good and bad men; *i. e.* between those who maintain the Empire of reason, assisted by the motives of *Religion*, over all the inferiour faculties, and such who dethrone their souls and make them slaves to every lust that will command them. And if men willingly subject themselves to that which they were born to rule, they have none to blame but themselves for it. Neither is it any excuse at all, that this, through the degeneracy of mankind, is grown the common custom of the world; unless that be in it self so great a Tyrant, that there is no resisting the power of it. If *God* had commanded us to comply with all the customs of the world, and at the same time to be *sober, righteous, and good*, we must have lived in another age than we live in, to have excused these two commands from a palpable contradiction. But instead of this, he hath forewarned us of the danger of being led aside by the soft and easie compliances of the world; and if we are sensible of our own infirmities, (as we have all
reason

reason to be) he hath offered us the assistance of his *Grace* and of that *Spirit* of his, (a) *which is greater than the Spirit* ^{(a) 1 Joh. 4. 4.} *that is in the World.* He hath promised us those weapons whereby we may withstand the *torrent* of wickedness in the world, with far greater success than the old (b) *Gauls* were wont to do in the inundations of their Country, whose custom was to be drowned with their arms in their hands. But it will be the greater folly in us to be so, because we have not only sufficient means of resistance, but we understand the danger before-hand. If we once forsake the strict rules of Religion and Goodness, and are ready to yield our selves to whatever hath got retainers enough to set up for a custom, we may know where we begin, but we cannot where we shall make an end. For every fresh assault makes the breach wider, at which more enemies may come in still; so that when we find our selves under their power, we are contented for our own ease to call them *Friends*. Which is the unhappy consequence of too easie yielding at first, till at last the greatest slavery to sin be accounted but good humour, and a gentile compliance with the fashions of the

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world.

(b) Nicol.
Damascen.
de moribus
gent. p. 9.
Ed. Cragii.

(a) *Geta in
Appiano.*

(b) *Herod.
Thal. v Sy-
nes. de lau-
de Calvi-
nitii. p. 77.*

world. So that when men are perswaded, either through fear, or too great easiness to disuse that strict eye which they had before to their actions, it oft-times falls out with them, as it did with the Souldier in the (a) *Roman History*, who blinded his eye so long in the time of the Civil Wars, that when he would have used it again, he could not. And when custom hath by degrees taken away the sense of sin from their Consciences, they grow as hard as (b) *Herodotus* tells us the heads of the old *Egyptians* were by the heat of the Sun, that nothing would ever enter them. If men will with *Nebuchadnezzar* herd with the beasts of the field, no wonder if their reason departs from them, and by degrees they grow as savage as the company they keep. So powerful a thing is Custom to debauch mankind, and so easily do the greatest vices by degrees obtain admission into the souls of men, under pretence of being retainers to the common *infirmities* of humane nature. Which is a *phrase*, through the power of self-flattery, and mens ignorance in the nature of moral actions, made to be of so large and comprehensive a sense that the most wilful violations of the *Laws* of Heaven, and such

such which the *Scripture* tells us do exclude from the *Kingdom* of it, do find (rather than make) friends enough to shelter themselves under the *protection* of them. But such a *protection* it is, which is neither allowed in the *Court* of Heaven, nor will ever secure the souls of men without a hearty and sincere repentance, from the *arrest* of divine justice ; which when it comes to call the world to an account of their actions will make no defalcations at all for the power of custom, or common practice of the world.

3. *The Impossibility of the Command, or rather of obedience to it.* When neither of the former pleas will effect their design, but notwithstanding the pretended *necessity of humane actions*, and the more than pretended *common practice of the World*, their Consciences still fly in their faces, and rebuke them sharply for their sins, then in a mighty rage and fury they charge *God* himself with *Tyranny* in laying impossible *Laws* upon the sons of men. But if we either consider the nature of the command, or the promises which accompany it, or the large experience of the world to the contrary, we shall easily discover that this pretence is altogether as unreasonable as either of

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the foregoing. For what is it that *God* requires of men as the condition of their future happiness which in its own nature is judged impossible? Is it for men to

(a) Tit. 2.
12. *(a) live soberly, righteously and godly in this world?* for that was the end of Christian Religion to perswade men to do so: but who thinks it impossible to avoid the occasions of intemperance, not to defraud, or injure his neighbours, or to pay that reverence and sincere devotion to *God* which we owe unto him? *Is it to do as we would be done by?* yet that hath been judged by strangers to the *Christian Religion* a most exact measure of humane conversation; Is it *to maintain an universal kindness and good will to men?* that indeed is the great excellency of our Religion, that it so strictly requires it; but if this be impossible, farewell all *good nature* in the world; and I suppose few will own this charge, lest theirs be suspected. Is it *to be patient under sufferings, moderate in our desires, circumspect in our actions, contented in all conditions?* yet these are things which those have pretended to who never owned *Christianity*, and therefore surely they never thought them impossible. Is it *to be charitable to the poor, compassionate to those*

in misery? is it to be frequent in Prayer, to love God above all things, to forgive our enemies as we hope God will forgive us, to believe the Gospel, and be ready to suffer for the sake of Christ? there are very few among us but will say they do all these things already, and therefore surely they do not think them impossible. The like answer I might give to all the other precepts of the Gospel till we come to the denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and as to these too, if we charge men with them, they either deny their committing them, and then say they have kept the command: or if they confess it, they promise amendment for the future; but in neither respect can they be said to think the command impossible. Thus we see their own mouths will condemn them when they charge God with laying impossible Laws on mankind. But if we enquire further than into the judgments of those (who it may be never concerned themselves so much about the precepts of Christian Religion, as to try whether they had any power to observe them or not); nay, if we yield them more (than, it may be, they are willing to enquire after, though they ought to do it) viz. that without the assistance of divine grace, they can ne-

ver do it : yet such is the unlimited nature of divine goodness and the exceeding riches of Gods Grace, that (knowing the weakness and degeneracy of humane Nature when he gave these commands to men) he makes a large and free offer of assistance to all those who are so sensible of their own infirmity as to beg it of him. And can men then say the command is impossible when he hath promised an assistance suitable to the nature of the duty and the infirmities of men? If it be acknowledged that some of the duties of *Christianity* are very difficult to us now ; let us consider by what means he hath sweetened the performance of them. Will not the proposal of so excellent a reward, make us swallow some more than ordinary hardships that we might enjoy it? hath he not made use of the most obliging motives to persuade us to the practice of what he requires by the infinite discovery of his own love, the death of his Son, and the promise of his Spirit? And what then is wanting, but only setting our selves to the serious obedience of them, to make his commands not only not impossible, but easie to us? But our grand fault is, we make impossibilities our selves where we find none, and then we complain of them :

them : we are first resolved not to practise the commands, and then nothing more easie than to find fault with them : we first pass sentence, and then examine evidences ; first condemn, and then enquire into the merits of the Cause. Yet surely none of these things can be accounted impossible , which have been done by all those who have been sincere and hearty Christians ; and *God* forbid we should think all guilty of hypocrisie, who have professed the *Christian Religion* from the beginning of it to this day. Nay more than so, they have not only done them, but professed to have that joy and satisfaction of mind in the doing of them, which they would not exchange for all the pleasures and delights of the world. These were the men, who not only were patient, but rejoyced in sufferings ; who accounted it their honour and glory to endure any thing for the sake of so excellent a Religion ; who were so assured of a future happiness by it, that they valued Martyrdoms above Crowns and Scepters. But *God* be thanked, we may hope to come to Heaven on easier terms than these, or else many others might never come thither, besides those who think to make this a pretence for

for their sin, that now when with encouragement and honour we may practise our Religion, the commands of it are thought impossible by them. Thus we have made good the general Charge here implied against wicked men in that they are called *Fools*, by examining the most plausible pretences they bring for themselves.

I now come to the particular impeachment of their folly, because *they make a mock at sin*. And that I shall prove especially by two things: 1. Because this argues *the highest degree of wickedness*. 2. Because it betrays the *greatest weakness of judgment and want of consideration*.

1. Because it argues *the highest degree of wickedness*. If to sin be folly, to make a mock at it is little short of madness. It is such a height of impiety that few but those who are of very profligate consciences can attain to, without a long custom in sinning. For Conscience is at first modest, and starts and boggles at the appearance of a great wickedness, till it be used to it and grown familiar with it. It is no such easie matter for a man to get the mastery of his conscience; a great deal of force and violence must be used

used to ones self before he does it. The natural impressions of good and evil, the fears of a *Deity*, and the apprehensions of a future state are such curbs and checks in a sinners way, that he must first sin himself beyond all feeling of these, before he can attain to the *seat* of the *scorners*. And we may justly wonder how any should ever come thither, when they must break through all that is ingenuous and modest, all that is vertuous and good, all that is tender and apprehensive in humane nature, before they can arrive at it. They must first deny a *God*, and despise an immortal soul, they must conquer their own reason, and cancel the *Law written in their hearts*, they must hate all that is serious, and yet soberly believe themselves to be no better *than the beasts that perish*, before men can come to make a *scoff at religion*, and a *mock at sin*.

And who now could ever imagine that in a Nation professing *Christianity*, among a people whose *genius* enclines them to civility and religion, yea among those who have the greatest advantages of behaviour and education, and who are to give the *Laws of civility* to the rest of the Nation, there should any be found who should deride religion, make sport with their

their own profaneness, and make so light of nothing, as being damned? I come not here to accuse any, and least of all those who shew so much regard of *religion* as to be present in the places devoted to sacred purposes; but if there be any such here, whose consciences accuse themselves for any degrees of so great impiety, I beseech them by all that is dear and precious to them, by all that is sacred and serious, by the *vows* of their *Baptism*, and their *participation* of the *Holy Eucharist*, by all the kindness of Heaven which they either enjoy or hope for, by the death and sufferings of the *Son of God*, that they would now consider how great folly and wickedness they betray in it, and what the dreadful consequence of it will be, if they do not timely repent of it. If it were a doubt (as I hope it is not among any here) whether the matters of *Religion* be true or no, they are surely things which ought to be seriously thought and spoken of. It is certainly no jesting matter to affront a *God* of infinite *Majesty* and *Power*, (and he judges every wilful sinner to do so) nor can any one in his wits think it a thing not to be regarded, whether he be eternally happy or miserable. Methinks then among persons of civility and

and honour, above all others, *Religion* might at least be treated with the respect and reverence due to the concerns of it; that it be not made the sport of Entertainments, nor the common subject of *Plays* and *Comedies*. For is there nothing to trifle with, but *God* and his *Service*? Is wit grown so *schismatical* and *sacrilegious*, that it can please it self with nothing but *holy ground*? Are prophane-ness and wit grown such inseparable companions, that none shall be allowed to pretend to the one, but such as dare be highly guilty of the other? Far be it from those who have but the name of *Christians*, either to do these things themselves, or to be pleased with them that do them: especially in such times as ours of late have been, when *God* hath used so many ways to make us serious if any thing would ever do it. If men had only slighted *God* and *Religion*, and *made a mock at sin*, when they had grown wanton through the abundance of peace and plenty, and saw no severities of *God's justice* used upon such who did it; yet the fault had been so great, as might have done enough to have interrupted their peace and destroyed that *plenty*, which made them out of the greatness of their pride and wanton-
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ness to kick against Heaven : but to do it in despite of all *God's* judgments, to laugh in his face when his rod is upon our backs, when neither Pestilence nor Fire can make us more afraid of him, exceedingly aggravates the impiety, and makes it more unpardonable. When like the

(a) Tacit.
de moribus
German.

old (a) Germans we dance among naked swords, when men shall defie and reproach Heaven in the midst of a Cities ruines, and over the graves of those whom the arrows of the Almighty have heaped together, what can be thought of such but that nothing will make them serious, but eternal misery ? And are they so sure there is no such thing to be feared, that they never think of it, but when by their execrable oaths they call upon *God* to damn them, for fear he should not do it time enough for them ? Thus will men abuse his patience, and provoke his justice, while they trample upon his kindness, and slight his severities, while they despise his Laws and mock at the breaches of them, what can be added more to their impiety ? or what can be expected by such who are guilty of it, but that *God* should quickly discover their mighty folly by letting them see how much they have deceived themselves, since (a) *God* will

(a) Gal. 6.
7.

will not be mocked, but (b) because of these (b) Eph 5. 6.
things the wrath of God will most certainly
come upon the children of disobedience.
Which leads to the second thing, wherein
this folly is seen.

2. Which is in the weakness of judgment
and want of consideration, which this be-
trays in men. Folly is the great unstead-
iness of the mind in the thoughts of what
is good and fitting to be done. It were
happy for many in the world, if none
should suffer in their reputation for want
of wisdom, but such whom nature or
some violent distemper have wholly de-
prived of the use of their reason and un-
derstandings: But wisdom does not lye
in the rambling imaginations of mens
minds (for fools may think of the same
things which wise men practise) but in a
due consideration and choice of things
which are most agreeable to the end they
design, supposing the end in the first
place to be worthy a wise mans choice ;
for I cannot yet see why the end may not
be chosen as well as the means, when
there are many stand in competition for
our choice, and men first deliberate, and
then determine which is the fittest to be
pursued. But when the actions of men
discover, that either they understand or
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regard not the most excellent end of their beings, or do those things which directly cross and thwart their own designs, or else pursue those which are mean and ignoble in themselves, we need not any further evidence of their folly, than these things discover.

Now that those who *make a mock at sin* are guilty of all these, will appear, if we consider whom they provoke by doing so, whom they most injure, and upon what reasonable consideration they are moved to what they do.

1. *Whom they provoke by their making a mock at sin* ; Supposing that there is a *Governour* of the world, who hath established *Laws* for us to be guided by, we may easily understand, whose honour and authority is reflected on, when the violations of his *Laws* are made nothing of. For surely if they had a just esteem of his *Power* and *Soveraignty*, they never durst make so bold with him, as all those do who not only commit sin themselves, but laugh at the scrupulosity of those who dare not. When *Dionysius* changed *Apollo's* Cloak, and took off the *Golden Beard* of *Æsculapius*, with those solemn jeers of the unsuitableness of the one to the Son of a beardless Father, and the much greater

greater conveniency of a cheaper garment to the other: it was a sign he stood not much in awe of the severity of their looks, nor had any dread at all of the greatness of their power. But although there be so infinite a disproportion between the artificial *Deities* of the *Heathens* and the *Majesty* of him who made and governs the whole world; yet as little reverence to his power and authority is shewed by all such who dare affront him with such a mighty confidence, and bid the greatest defiance to his *Laws* by scoffing at them. What is there the *Sovereigns* and *Princes* of the earth do more justly resent, and express the highest indignation against, than to have their *Laws* despised, their *Persons* affronted, and there Authority contemned? And can we then imagine, that a *God* of infinite *Power* and *Majesty*, the honour of whose *Laws* is as dear to him as his own is, should sit still unconcerned, when so many indignities are continually offered them, and never take any notice at all of them? It is true, his patience is not to be measured by our fretful and peevish natures, (and it is happy for us all that it is not) he knows the sinner can never escape his power, and therefore bears the longer with him: but yet his lenity is always joyned with his wisdom

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and justice, and the time is coming when patience it self shall be no more. Is it not then the highest madness and folly to provoke one whose power is infinitely greater than our own is, and from the severity of whose wrath we cannot secure our selves one minute of an hour ? How knowest thou, O vain man, but that in the midst of all thy mirth and jollity, while thou art boasting of thy sins, and thinkest thou canst never fill up fast enough the measure of thy iniquities, a sudden fit of an *Apoplexy*, or the breaking of an *Aposteme*, or any of the innumerable instruments of death, may dispatch thee hence, and consign thee into the hands of divine Justice ? And wherewithall then wilt thou be able to dispute with *God* ? Wilt thou then charge his Providence with folly, and his Laws with unreasonableness ? when his *greatness* shall affright thee, his *Maiesty* astonish thee, his *Power* disarm thee, and his *Justice* proceed against thee : when notwithstanding all thy *bravado's* here, they own Conscience shall be not only thy accuser and witness, but thy judge and executioner too : when it shall *revenge* it self upon thee for all the rapes and violences thou hast committed upon it here : when horror and confusion shall be thy portion,

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and the unspeakable anguish of a racked and tormented mind shall too late convince thee of thy folly in *making a mock* at that which stings with an everlasting venom. Art thou then resolved to put all these things to the adventure, and live as securely as if the *terrors* of the *Almighty* were but the dreams of men awake, or the fancies of *weak* and distempered brains? But I had rather believe that in the heat and fury of thy lusts thou wouldst seem to others to think so, than thou either doest or canst persuade thy self to such unreasonable folly. Is it not then far better to consult the tranquillity of thy mind here, and the eternal happiness of it hereafter, by a serious repentance and speedy amendment of thy life, than to expose thy self for the sake of thy sensual pleasures to the fury of that *God* whose justice is infinite, and power irresistible? Shall not *the apprehension of his excellency* make thee now afraid of him? Never then make any mock at sin more, unless thou art able to contend with the *Almighty*, or to dwell with everlasting burnings.

2. The folly of it is seen in considering whom the injury redounds to by mens making themselves so pleasant with their sins. Do they think by their rude attempts to dethrone the *Majesty* of Heaven,

or by standing at the greatest defiance, to make him willing to come to terms of composition with them? Do they hope to slip beyond the bounds of his power, by falling into nothing when they die, or to sue out *prohibitions* in the Court of Heaven, to hinder the effects of *Justice* there? Do they design to out-wit infinite Wisdom, or to find such flaws in God's government of the World, that he shall be contented to let them go unpunished? All which imaginations are alike vain and foolish, and only shew how easily wickedness baffles the reason of mankind, and makes them rather hope or wish for the most impossible things than believe they shall ever be punished for their impieties. If the *Apostate, Spirits* can by reason of their present restraint and expectation of future punishments be as pleasant in beholding the *follies* of men as they are malicious to suggest them, it may be one of the greatest diversions of their misery, to see how active and witty men are in contriving their own ruine. To see with what greediness they catch at every bait that is offered them, and when they are swallowing the most deadly *poyson*, what arts they use to perswade themselves that it is a healthful potion. No doubt, nothing can more gratifie them than to see
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men sport themselves into their own destruction, and go down so pleasantly to Hell : when eternal flames become their first awakers, and then men begin to be wise, when it is too late to be so : when nothing but insupportable torments can convince them that *God* was in earnest with them, and that he would not always bear the affronts of evil men, and that those who derided the miseries of another life, shall have leisure enough to repent their folly, when their repentance shall only increase their sorrow without hopes of pardon by it.

3. But if there were any present felicity, or any considerable advantage to be gained by this *mocking at sin*, and undervaluing Religion, there would seem to be some kind of pretence, though nothing of true reason for it. Yet that which heightens this folly to the highest degree in the last place is, that there can be no imaginable consideration thought on which might look like a *plausible temptation* to it. The covetous man, when he hath defrauded his neighbour, and used all kinds of arts to compass an Estate, hath the fulness of his bags to answer for him, and whatever they may do in another world, he is sure they will do much in

this. The voluptuous man hath the strong propensities of his Nature, the force of temptation which lies in the charms of beauty, to excuse his unlawful pleasures by. The ambitious man, hath the greatness of his mind, the advantage of authority, the examples of those who have been great before him, and the envy of those who condemn him, to plead for the heights he aims at. But what is it which the persons who despise Religion, and laughs at every thing that is serious, proposes to himself as the reason of what he does? But alas! this were to suppose him to be much more serious than he is, if he did propound any thing to himself as the ground of his actions. But it may be a great kindness to others, though none to himself; I cannot imagine any unless it may be, to make them thankful they are not arrived to that height of folly; or out of perfect good nature, lest they should take him to be wiser than he is. The *Psalmists* fool despises him as much as he does Religion: for he only *saieth it in his heart, there is no God*; but this though he dares not think there is none, yet shews him not near so much outward respect and reverence as the other does. Even the *Atheist*
himself

himself thinks him a *Fool*, and the greatest of all other, who believes a *God*, and yet affronts him and trifles with him. And although the *Athiests* folly be unaccountable, in resisting the clearest evidence of reason, yet so far he is to be commended for what he says, that if there be such a thing as *Religion*, men ought to be serious in it. So that of all hands the *scoffer at Religion* is looked on as one forsaken of that little reason, which might serve to uphold a slender reputation of being above *the beasts that perish* : nay, therein his condition is worse than theirs, that as they understand not *Religion*, they shall never be punished for despising it : which such a person can never secure himself from, considering the *power*, the *justice*, the *severity* of that *God*, whom he hath so highly provoked. *God* grant that the apprehension of this danger may make us so serious in the profession and practice of our Religion, that we may not by slighting that, and *mocking at sin*, provoke him *to laugh at our calamities, and mock when our fear comes* ; but that by beholding the sincerity of our repentance, and the heartiness of our devotion to him, he may *turn his anger away from us, and rejoyce over us to do us good.*

SERMON III.

Preached at

WHITE-HALL.

Luke VII. XXXV.

But Wisdom is justified of all her Children.

OF all the Circumstances of our Blessed Saviours appearance and preaching in the World, there is none which to our first view and apprehension of things, seems more strange and unaccountable, than that those persons who were then thought of all others to be most conversant in the Law and the Prophets, should be the most obstinate opposers of him. For since he came to fulfil all the Prophecies which had gone before concerning him, and was himself the great Prophet foretold by all the rest, none might in humane probability have been judged more likely to have received

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and honoured him, than those to whom the judgment of those things did peculiarly belong; and who were as much concerned in the truth of them as any else could be. Thus indeed it might have been reasonably expected; and doubtless it had been so, if interest and prejudice had not had a far more absolute power and dominion over them, than they had over the rest of the people. If Miracles, and Prophecies, if Reason and Religion; nay, if the interest of another World could have prevailed over the interest of this among them; the *Jewish Sanhedrin* might have been some of the first Converts to Christianity, the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* had been all Profelytes to Christ, and the Temple at *Jerusalem* had been the first Christian Church. But to let us see with what a jealous eye Power and Interest looks on every thing that seems to offer at any disturbance of it, how much greater sway partiality and prejudice hath upon the minds of men than true Reason and Religion; and how hard a matter it is to convince those who have no mind to be convinced; we find none more furious in their opposition to the person of Christ, none more obstinate in their infidelity as to this Doctrine, than

than those who were at that time in the greatest reputation among them for their authority, wisdom, and knowledge. These are they, whom our Saviour, as often as he meets with, either checks for their ignorance, or rebukes for their pride, or denounces woes against for their malice and hypocrisie: These are they who instead of believing in Christ persecute him; instead of following him seek to destroy him: and that they might the better compass it, they reproach and defame him, as if he had been really as bad as themselves. And although the people might not presently believe what they said concerning him, yet that they might at least be kept in suspense by it, they endeavour to fasten the blackest calumnies upon him: and suit them with all imaginable arts to the tempers of those they had to deal with.

If any appeared zealous for the present peace and prosperity of the Nation; and for paying the duty and obedience they owed to the *Roman* Power, which then governed them: to them he is represented as a factious and seditious person, as an enemy to *Cæsar*, as one that intended to set up a Kingdom of his own, though to the ruine of his Country: That it was
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nothing but ambition and vain-glory, which made him gather Disciples, and preach to multitudes; that none could foretel what the dangerous consequences of such new Doctrines might be, if not timely suppressed, and the Author of them severely punished. Thus to the prudent and cautious, reason of State is pretended as the ground of their enmity to Christ. But to those who are impatient of the *Roman* yoke, and watched for any opportunity to cast it off; they suggest the mighty improbabilities of ever obtaining any deliverance by a person so mean and inconsiderable as our Saviour appeared among them: and that surely God who delivered their Forefathers of old from a bondage not greater than theirs, by a mighty hand and out-stretched arm, did never intend the redemption of his people by one of obscure Parentage, mean Education, and of no interest in the world. To the great men, they need no more than bid them, behold the train of his followers, who being generally poor, the more numerous they were, the more mouths they might see open, and ready to devour the Estates of those who were above them. The Priests and Levites they bid consider what would become of them

them all, if the Law of *Moses* was abrogated, by which their interest was upheld: for if the Temple fell, it was impossible for them to stand. But the grand difficulty was among the people, who began to be possessed with so high an opinion of him by the greatness of his Miracles, the excellency of his Doctrine, and the innocency of his Conversation, that unless they could insinuate into their minds some effectual prejudices against these, all their other attempts were like to be vain and unsuccessful. If therefore they meet with any who were surprized by his Miracles, as well as ravished by his Doctrine; when they saw him raise the dead, restore sight to the blind, cure the deaf and the lame, and cast out Devils out of possessed persons, they tell them presently that these were the common arts of Impostors, and the practice of those who go about to deceive the people; that such things were easily done by the power of Magick, and assistance of the evil Spirits. If any were admirers of the Pharisaical rigours and austerities (as the people generally were) when mens Religion was measured by the sowerness of their Countenances, the length of their Prayers, and the distance they kept from other persons;

sons; these they bid especially beware of our Saviours Doctrine; for he condemned all zeal and devotion, all mortification and strictness of life, under the pretence of Pharisaical hypocrisie; that he sunk all Religion into short Prayers and dull Morality; that his conversation was not among the persons of any reputation for piety, but among Publicans and Sinners; that nothing extraordinary appeared in his Life; that his actions were like other mens, and his company none of the best, and his behaviour among them with too great a freedom for a person who pretended to so high a degree of holiness.

Thus we see the most perfect innocency could not escape the venom of malicious tongues; but the less it enter'd, the more they were enraged, and made up what wanted in the truth of their calumnies, by their diligence in spreading them. As though their mouths indeed had been open Sepulchres by the noysom vapours which came out of them; and we may well think no less a poyson than that of Asps could be under their lips, which so secretly and yet so mischievously conveyed it self into the hearts of the people. The only advantage which malice hath against the greatest Virtue, is, that the greater it is, the less it takes notice of all
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the petty arts which are used against it ; and will not bring its own innocency so much into suspicion as to make any long Apologies for it self. For, to a noble and generous spirit, assaulted rather by noise and clamour, than any solid reason or force of argument, neglect and disdain are the most proper weapons of defence: for where malice is only impertinent and troublesome, a punctual answer seems next to a confession. But although innocency needs no defence as to it self, yet it is necessary for all the advantages it hath of doing good to mankind, that it appear to be what it really is ; which cannot be done, unless its reputation be cleared from the malicious aspersions which are cast upon it. And from hence it was that our blessed Saviour, though he thought it not worth the while to use the same diligence in the vindication of himself, which his enemies did in the defamation of him ; yet when he saw it necessary in order to the reception of his Doctrine among the more ingenious and tractable part of his auditors, he sometimes by the quickness of his replies, sometimes by the suddenness and sharpness of his questions, and sometimes by the plain force of argument and reason, baffles his adversaries, so that though they
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were resolved not to be convinced, they thought it best for the time to be quiet. This was to let them see how easy it was for him to throw off their reproaches as fast as their malice could invent them; and that it was as impossible for them by such weak attempts to obscure the reputation of his innocency, as for the spots which Astronomers discern near the body of the Sun, ever to eclipse the light of it. So that all those thinner mists which envy and detraction raised at his first appearance, and those grosser vapours which arose from their open enmity when he came to a greater height, did but add a brighter lustre to his glory, when it was seen that notwithstanding all the machinations of his enemies, his innocency brake forth like the light, which shineth more and more to the perfect day.

But it pleased God, for the tryal of mens minds so to order the matters of our Religion, that as they are never so clear, but men of obstinate and perverse spirits will find something to cavil at; so they were never so dark and obscure in the most difficult circumstances of them, but men of unprejudiced and ingenuous minds might find enough to satisfy themselves about them. Which is the main scope of
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our Saviour in the words of the Text, (and shall be of our present discourse upon them) *but wisdom is justified of all her Children*. Where without any further Explication, by *Wisdom* we understand the method which God useth in order to the salvation of mankind; by the *Children of Wisdom*, all those who were willing to attain the end by the means which God affordeth, and by *justifying* not only the bare approving it, but the declaring of that approbation to the World by a just vindication of it from the cavils and exceptions of men. Although the words are capable of various senses, yet this is the most natural, and agreeable to the scope of what goes before. For there our Saviour speaks of the different ways wherein *John Baptist* and himself appeared among the *Jews*, in order to the same end, *v. 32*. For *John Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and ye say, he hath a Devil*. A very severe Devil surely, and one of the strictest order among them, that was so far from being cast out by fasting and prayer, that these were his continual imployment! But what could we have sooner thought than that those persons who made the Devil the author of so much mortification and severity

severity of life, should presently have entertained Religion in a more free and pleasing humour; but this would not take neither, for *the Son of Man comes eating and drinking*; i. e. was remarkable for none of those rigours and austerities which they condemned in *John*, and applauded in the *Pharisees*; and then presently they censure him, as a *gluttonous man, and a Wine-bibber, a friend of Publicans and Sinners*, v. 34. i. e. the utmost excess that any course of life was capable of they presently apply to those who had no other design in all their actions, than to recommend true piety and goodness to them. So impossible it was by any means which the wisdom of Heaven thought fit to use, to perswade them into any good opinion of the persons who brought the glad tidings of Salvation to them: and therefore our Saviour, when he sees how refractory and perverse they were, in interpreting every thing to the worse, and censuring the ways which infinite Wisdom thought fittest to reclaim them by, he tells them that it was nothing but malice and obstinacy which was the cause of it; but if they were men of teachable spirits (who by an usual Hebraism are called the Children of Wisdom) they

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would see reason enough to admire, approve and justifie all the methods of divine Providence for the good of Mankind. *For Wisdom is justified of all her Children.*

That which I mainly design to speak to from hence is, *That although the wisest Contrivances of Heaven for the good of Mankind are liable to the unjust cavils and exceptions of unreasonable men, yet there is enough to satisfy any teachable and ingenuous Minds concerning the wisdom of them.* Before I come more particularly to examine those which concern our present subject, viz. the life and appearance of our Lord and Saviour, it will take very much off from the force of them, if we consider, that thus it hath always been, and supposing humane nature to be as it is, it is scarce conceivable that it should be otherwise. Not that it is necessary or reasonable it should be so at all, any more than it is necessary that men should act foolishly or inconsiderately; but as long as we must never expect to see all men either wise or pious, either to have a true judgment of things, or a love of Religion; so long we shall always find there will be some, who will be quarrelling with Religion when they have no mind to practise

etise it. I speak not now of those who make a meer jest and scoff at Religion (of which our Age hath so many Instances) but of a sort of men who are of a degree above the other, though far enough short of any true and solid wisdom; who yet are the more to be considered, because they seem to make a slender offer at reason in what they say. Some pretend they are not only unsatisfied with the particular ways of instituted Religion, any further than they are subservient to their present interest (which is the only God they worship) but to make all sure, the foundations even of Natural Religion itself cannot escape their cavils and exceptions. They have found out an *Index Expurgatorius* for those impressions of a Deity which are in the hearts of men; and use their utmost arts to obscure, since they cannot extinguish, those lively characters of the power, wisdom and goodness of God, which are every where to be seen in the large volume of the Creation. Religion is no more to them but an unaccountable fear; and the very notion of a spiritual substance (even of that without which we could never know what a contradiction meant) is said to imply one. But if for quietness sake,

and it may be to content their own minds as well as the World, they are willing to admit of a Deity, (which is a mighty concession from those who have so much cause to be afraid of him) then to ease their minds of such troublesome companions as their fears are, they seek by all means to dispossess him of his Government of the World, by denying his Providence, and care of humane affairs. They are contented he should be called an excellent Being, that should do nothing, and therefore signifie nothing in the World ; or rather, then he might be styled an Almighty *Sardanapalus*, that is so fond of ease and pleasure, that the least thought of business would quite spoil his happiness. Or if the activity of their own spirits may make them think that such an excellent Being may sometimes draw the Curtains and look abroad into the World, then every advantage which another hath got above them, and every cross accident which befalls themselves (which by the power of self-flattery most men have learnt to call the Prosperity of the wicked, and the Sufferings of good men) serve them for mighty charges against the justice of Divine Providence. Thus either God shall not govern the World

World at all, or if he do, it must be upon such terms as they please and approve of, or else they will erect an High Court of Justice upon him, and condemn the Sovereign of the World, because he could not please his discontented Subjects. And as if he were indeed arraigned at such a bar, every weak and peevish exception shall be cryed up for evidence; when the fullest and clearest vindications of him shall be scorned and contemned. But this doth not in the least argue the obnoxiousness of him who is so accused, but the great injustice of those who dare pass sentence; where it is neither in their power to understand the reason of his actions, nor if it were, to call him in question for his proceedings with men. But so great is the pride and arrogance of humane Nature, that it loveth to be condemning what it cannot comprehend; and there needs be no greater reason given concerning the many disputes in the world about Divine Providence, than that God is wise, and we are not but would fain seem to be so. While men are in the dark they will be always quarrelling; and those who contend the most, do it that they might seem to others to see, when they know themselves they do

not. Nay, there is nothing so plain and evident, but the reason of some men is more apt to be imposed upon in it, than their senses are ; as it appeared in him who could not otherwise confute the Philosophers argument against motion, but by moving before him. So that we see the most certain things in the world are liable to the cavils of men who employ their wits to do it ; and certainly those ought not to stagger mens faith in matters of the highett nature and consequence, which would not at all move them in other things.

But at last it is acknowledged by the men who love to be called the men of wit in this Age of ours, that there is a God and Providence, a future state, and the differences of good and evil, but the Christian Religion they will see no further reason to embrace than as it is the Religion of the State they live in. But if we demand what mighty reasons they are able to bring forth against a Religion so holy and innocent in its design, so agreeable to the Nature of God and Man, so well contrived for the advantages of this and another life, so fully attested to come from God by the Miracles wrought in confirmation of it, by the death

death of the Son of God, and of such multitudes of Martyrs, so certainly conveyed to us, by the unquestionable Tradition of all Ages since the first delivery of it ; the utmost they can pretend against it is, that it is built upon such an appearance of the Son of God which was too mean and contemptible, that the Doctrine of it is inconsistent with the Civil Interests of men, and the design ineffectual for the Reformation of the World. For the removal therefore of these cavils against our Religion, I shall shew,

1. That there were no circumstances in our Saviours appearance or course of life, which were unbecoming the Son of God, and the design he came upon.

2. That the Doctrine delivered by him is so far from being contrary to the Civil Interests of the World, that it tends highly to the preservation of them.

3. That the design he came upon was very agreeable to the Infinite Wisdom of God, and most effectual for the reformation of Mankind.

For clearing the first of these, I shall consider, (1.) The Manner of our Saviours

ours appearance. (2.) The Course of his Life ; and what it was which his enemies did most object against him.

1. The manner of our Saviours Appearance ; which hath been always the great offence to the admirers of the pomp and greatness of this World. For when they heard of the Son of God coming down from Heaven , and making his Progress into this lower world , they could imagin nothing less, than that an innumerable company of Angels must have been dispatched before , to have prepared a place for his reception ; that all the Sovereigns and Princes of the World must have been summoned to give their attendance and pay their homage to him : that their Scepters must have been immediately laid at his feet, and all the Kingdoms of the earth been united into one universal Monarchy under the Empire of the Son of God : That the Heavens should bow down at his presence to shew their obeysance to him, the Earth tremble and shake for fear at the near approaches of his Majesty ; that all the Clouds should clap together in one universal Thunder, to welcome his appearance, and tell the Inhabitants of the World what cause they had to fear him

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whom the Powers of the Heavens obey : that the Sea should run out of its wonted course with amazement and horror ; and if it were possible, hide it self in the hollow places of the earth : that the Mountains should shrink in their heads, to fill up the vast places of the deep ; so that all that should be fulfilled in a literal sense, which was foretold of the coming of the *Messias*, (a) *That every Valley should be filled, and every Mountain and Hill brought low ; the crooked made straight, and the rough ways smooth, and all flesh see the salvation of God.* Yea, that the Son for a time should be darkned, and the Moon withdraw her light, to let the Nations of the Earth understand that a Glory infinitely greater than theirs did now appear to the World. In a word, they could not imagine the Son of God could be born without the pangs and throws of the whole Creation ; that it was as impossible for him to appear, as for the Son in the Firmament to disappear, without the notice of the whole World. But when instead of all his pomp and grandeur he comes *incognito* into the World, instead of giving notice of his appearance to the Potentates of the Earth, he is only discovered to a few silly Shepherds and three Wise men of

of the East; instead of choosing either *Rome* or *Hierusalem* for the place of his Nativity, he is born at *Bethleem*, a mean and obscure Village: instead of the glorious and magnificent Palaces of the East or West, which were at that time so famous; he is brought forth in a Stable, where the Manger was his Cradle, and his Mother the only attendant about him: who was her self none of the great persons of the Court, nor of any fame in the Country; but was only rich in her Genealogy, and honourable in her Pedigree. And according to the obscurity of his Birth was his Education too: his Youth was not spent in the Imperial Court at *Rome*, nor in the Schools of Philosophers at *Athens*, nor at the feet of the great Rabbies at *Jerusalem*: but at *Nazareth*,^a a place of mean esteem among the *Jews*, where he was remarkable for nothing so much as the Vertues proper to his Age, Modesty, Humility and Obedience. All which he exercises to so high a degree, that his greatest kindred and acquaintance were mightily surprized when at 30 years of age, he began to discover himself by the Miracles which he wrought, and the Authority which he spake with. And although the rays of his

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his Divinity began to break forth through the Clouds he had hitherto disguised himself in, yet he persisted still in the same course of humility and self-denial: taking care of others to the neglect of himself; feeding others by a Miracle, and fasting himself, to one: shewing his power in working miraculous Cures, and his humility in concealing them: Conversing with the meanest of the people, and choosing such for his Apostles, who brought nothing to recommend them but innocency and simplicity. Who by their heats and ignorance were continual exercises of his patience in bearing with them, and of his care and tenderness in instructing them. And after a life thus led with such unparallel'd humility, when he could add nothing more to it by his actions, he doth it by his sufferings; and compleats the sad Tragedy of his Life by a most shameful and ignominious Death. This is the short and true account of all those things which the admirers of the greatness of this world think mean and contemptible in our Saviours appearance here on earth. But we are now to consider whether so great humility were not more agreeable with the design of his coming into the World, than all that pomp and

and state would have been which the Son of God might have more easily commanded than we can imagine. He came not upon so mean an errand, as to dazle the eyes of Mankind with the brightness of his Glory, to amaze them by the terribleness of his Majesty, much less to make a shew of the riches and gallantry of the World to them : But he came upon far more noble and excellent designs, to bring life and immortality to light, to give men the highest assurance of an eternal happiness and misery in the World to come, and the most certain directions for obtaining the one, and avoiding the other: and in order to that, nothing was judged more necessary by him, than to bring the vanities of this World out of that credit and reputation they had gained among foolish men. Which he could never have done, if he had declaimed never so much against the vanity of worldly greatness, riches and honours, if in the mean time himself had lived in the greatest splendour and bravery. For the enjoying then the contempt of this world to his Disciples in hopes of a better, would have looked like the commendation of the excellency of fasting at a full meal, and of the conveniencies of poverty by
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one who makes the greatest hast to be rich. That he might not therefore seem to offer so great a contradiction to his Doctrine by his own example, he makes choice of a life so remote from all suspicion of designs upon this world, that *though the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, yet the Son of Man, who was the Lord and Heir of all things, had not whereon to lay his head.* And as he shewed by his life how little he valued the great things of the World, so he discovered by his death how little he feared the evil things of it : all which he did with a purpose and intention to rectifie the great mistakes of men as to these things: That they might no longer venture an eternal happiness for the splendid and glorious vanities of this present life ; nor expose themselves to the utmost miseries of another world, to avoid the frowns of this. From hence proceeded that generous contempt of the World, which not only our Saviour himself, but all his true Disciples of the first Ages of Christianity were so remarkable for ; to let others see they had greater things in their eye than any here, the hopes of which they would not part with for all that this world thinks great or desirable.

So

So that considering the great danger most men are in, by too passionate a love of these things, and that universal and infinite kindness which our Saviour had to the Souls of men; there was nothing he could discover it more in as to his appearance in the world, than by putting such an affront upon the greatness and honour of it, as he did by so open a neglect of it in his life, and despising it in his death and sufferings. And who now upon any pretence of reason dare entertain the meaner apprehensions of our Blessed Saviour because he appeared without the pomp and greatness of the world, when the reason of his doing so was, that by his own humility and self-denial he might shew us the way to an eternal happiness? Which he well knew how very hard it would be for men to attain to, who measure things not according to their inward worth and excellency, but the splendour and appearance which they make to the world: who think nothing great but what makes them gazed upon; nothing desirable but what makes them flattered. But if they could be once perswaded how incomparably valuable the glories of the life to come are above all the gayeties and shews of this; they

they would think no condition mean or contemptible, which led to so great an end ; none happy or honourable which must so soon end in the grave, or be changed to eternal misery. And that we might entertain such thoughts as these are, not as the melancholy effects of discontent and disappointments, but as the serious result of our most deliberate enquiry into the value of things, was the design of our Saviour in the humility of his appearance, and of that excellent Doctrine which he recommended to the World by it. Were I to argue the case with Philosophers, I might then at large shew from the free acknowledgments of the best and most experienced of them, that nothing becomes so much one who designs to recommend Vertue to the World, as a real and hearty contempt of all the pomp of it, and that the meanest condition proceeding from such a principle is truly and in it self more honourable, than living in the greatest splendour imaginable. Were I to deal with the *Jews*, I might then prove, that as the Prophecies concerning the *Messias* speak of great and wonderful effects of his coming, so that they should be accomplished in a way of suffering and humility. But since I speak

speake to Christians, and therefore to those who were perswaded of the great kindness and love of our Saviour in coming into the World, to reform it, and that by convincing men of the truth and excellency of a future state, no more need to be said to vindicate the appearance of him from that meanness and contempt, which the pride and ambition of vain men is apt to cast upon it.

2. But not only our Saviours manner of Appearance, but the manner of his Conversation gave great offence to his enemies, viz. That it was too free and familiar among persons who had the meanest reputation, *the Publicans and Sinners*; and in the mean time declaimed against the strictest observers of the greatest rigours and austerities of life. And this no doubt was one great cause of the mortal hatred of the *Pharisees* against him, though least pretended, that even thereby they might make good that charge of hypocrisy which our Saviour so often draws up against them. And no wonder, if such severe rebukes did highly provoke them, since they found this so gainful and withall so easie a trade among the people, when with a demure look and a sower countenance they could cheat and defraud their

their Brethren ; and under a specious shew of devotion could break their fasts by devouring Widows houses, and end their long Prayers to God with acts of the highest injustice to their Neighbours. As though all that while, they had been only begging leave of God to do all the mischief they could to their Brethren. It is true, such as these were, our Saviour upon all occasions speaks against with the greatest sharpness, as being the most dangerous enemies to true Religion: and that which made men whose passion was too strong for their reason abhor the very name of Religion, when such baseness was practised under the profession of it. When they saw men offer to compound with Heaven for all their injustice and oppression, with not a twentieth part of what God challenges as his due; they either thought Religion to be a meer device of men, or that these mens hypocrisie ought to be discovered to the World. And therefore our Blessed Saviour, who came with a design to retrieve a true spirit of Religion among men, finds it first of all necessary to unmask those notorious hypocrites, that their deformities being discovered, their ways as well as their persons might be the better

understood and avoided. And when he saw by the mighty opinion they had of themselves, and their uncharitableness towards all others, how little good was to be done upon them, he seldom vouchsafes them his presence; but rather converses with those who being more openly wicked were more easily convinced of their wickedness, and persuaded to reform. For which end alone it was that he so freely conversed with them, to let them see there were none so bad, but his kindness was so great to them, that he was willing to do them all the good he could: And therefore this could be no more a just reproach to Christ, that he kept company sometimes with these, than it is to a Chyrurgion to visit Hospitals, or to a Physician to converse with the sick.

2. But when they saw that his Greatness did appear in another way, by the authority of his Doctrine, and the power of his Miracles, then these wise and subtile men apprehend a further reach and design in all his actions: *Viz.* That his low condition was a piece of Popularity, and a meer disguise to ensnare the people, the better to make them in love with his Doctrine, and so by degrees

grees to season them with Principles of Rebellion and Disobedience: Hence came all the clamours of his being an *Enemy to Cæsar*, and calling himself *the King of the Jews*, and of his design to erect a Kingdom of his own, all which they interpret in the most malicious though most unreasonable sense. For nothing is so politick as malice and ill-will, for that finds designs in every thing; and the more contrary they are to all the Protestations of the persons concerned, the deeper that suggests presently they are laid, and that there is the more cause to be afraid of them. Thus it was in our Blessed Saviour's case; it was not the greatest care used by him to shew his obedience to the Authority he lived under, it was not his most solemn disavowing having any thing to do with their civil Interests, not the severe checks he gave his own Disciples for any ambitious thoughts among them, not the recommending the doctrine of Obedience to them, nor the rebuke he gave one of his most forward Disciples for offering to draw his sword in the rescue of himself, could abate the fury and rage of his enemies, but at last they condemn the greatest Teacher of the duty of Obedi-

ence as a Traytor, and the most unparalleled'd example of innocency as a Malefactor. But though there could be nothing objected against the life and actions of our Blessed Saviour, as tending to sedition and disturbance of the Civil Peace, yet that, these men (who were inspir'd by malice, and prophesied according to their own interest) would say, was because he was taken away in time, before his designs could be ripe for action, but if his doctrine tended that way, it was enough to justify their proceedings against him. So then, it was not what he did, but what he might have done: not Treason but Convenience which made them take away the life of the most innocent person: but if there had been any taint in his doctrine that way, there had been reason enough in such an Age of faction and sedition to have used the utmost care to prevent the spreading it. But so far is this from the least ground of probability that it is not possible to imagine a Religion which aims less at the present particular interests of the embracers of it, and more at the publick interests of Princes than Christianity doth, as it was both preached and practis'd by our Saviour and his Apostles.

And

And here we have cause to lament the unhappy fate of Religion when it falls under the censure of such who think themselves the Masters of all the little arts whereby this world is governed. If it teaches the duty of Subjects, and the authority of Princes, if it requires obedience to Laws, and makes mens happiness or misery in another life in any measure to depend upon it; then Religion is suspected to be a meer trick of State, and an invention to keep the world in awe, whereby men might the better be moulded into Societies, and preserved in them. But if it appear to inforce any thing indispensably on the Consciences of men, though humane Laws require the contrary; if they must not forswear their Religion, and deny him whom they hope to be saved by, when the Magistrate calls them to it, then such half-witted men think that Religion is nothing but a pretence to Rebellion, and Conscience only an obstinate plea for Disobedience. But this is to take it for granted that there is no such thing as Religion in the World; for if there be, there must be some inviolable Rights of Divine Sovereignty acknowledged, which must not vary according to the diversity of the Edicts

and Laws of men. But supposing the profession and practice of the Christian Religion to be allowed inviolable, there was never any Religion, nay, never any inventions of the greatest Politicians which might compare with that for the preservation of civil Societies. For this in plain and expresse words tells all the owners of it, that they must live in sub-

(a) Rom. 13. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. *jection and obedience; (a) not only for wrath, but for Conscience sake; that they who do resist receive unto themselves damnation, and that because whosoever resisteth the Power, resisteth the Ordinance of God.* Than which it is impossible to conceive arguments of greater force to keep men in obedience to Authority; for he that only obeys because it is his interest to do so, will have the same reason to disobey when there is an apprehension that it may make more for his advantage. But when the reason of obedience is derived from the concernments of another life, no hopes of interest in this world can be thought to ballance the loss which may come by such a breach of duty in that to come. So that no persons do so dangerously undermine the foundations of civil Government, as those who magnifie that to the contempt of Religion;

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none so effectually secure them as those *who give to God the things that are Gods,* and by doing so, are obliged to *give to Cæsar the things that are Cæsars.* This was the Doctrine of Christianity as it was delivered by the first author of it; and the practice was agreeable, as long as Christianity preserved its primitive honour in the world. For, so far were men then from making their zeal for Religion a pretence to Rebellion, that though Christianity were directly contrary to the Religions then in vogue in the world, yet they knew of no other way of promoting it, but by patience, humility, meekness, prayers for their persecutors, and tears when they saw them obstinate. So far were they then from fomenting suspicions and jealousies concerning the Princes and Governours they lived under, that though they were generally known to be some of the worst of men as well as of Princes, yet they charge all Christians in the strictest manner, as they lov'd their Religion and the honour of it, as they valued their souls and the salvation of them, that they should be subject to them. So far were they then from giving the least encouragement to the usurpations of the rights

of Princes under the pretence of any power given to a Head of the Church: that there is no way for any to think they meant it, unless we suppose the Apostles such mighty Politicians, that it is because they say nothing at all of it; but on the contrary, *bid every soul be subject to the higher powers;* though an Apostle, Evangelist, Prophet, whatever he be, as the Fathers interpret it. Yea so constant and uniform was the doctrine and practice of Obedience in all the first and purest ages of the Christian Church, that no one instance can be produced of any usurpation of the rights of Princes under the pretence of any title from Christ, or any disobedience to their authority, under the pretence of promoting Christianity, through all those times wherein Christianity the most flourished, or the Christians were the most persecuted. And happy had it been for us in these last ages of the World, if we had been Christians on the same terms which they were in the Primitive times; then there had been no such scandals raised by the degeneracy of men upon the most excellent and peaceable Religion in the World, as though that were unquiet and troublefom, because so many

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ny have been so who have made shew of it. But let their pretences be never so great to Infallibility on one side, and to the Spirit on the other, so far as men encourage faction and disobedience, so far they have not the Spirit of Christ and Christianity, and therefore are none of his. For he shewed his great wisdom in contriving such a method of saving mens souls in another World, as tended most to the preservation of the peace and quietness of this; and though this wisdom may be evil spoken of by men of restless and unpeaceable minds, yet it will be still justified by all who have heartily embraced the Wisdom which is from above, who are pure and peaceable as that Wisdom is, and such, and only such are the Children of it.

3. I come to shew, That the design of Christ's appearance was very agreeable to the infinite Wisdom of God; and that the means were very suitable and effectual for carrying on of that design for the reformation of Mankind.

1. That the design it self was very agreeable to the infinite Wisdom of God. What could we imagine more becoming the Wisdom of God, than to contrive a way for the recovery of lapsed and degenerate

generate Mankind? who more fit to employ upon such a message as this, than the Son of God? for his coming gives the greatest assurance to the minds of men, that God was serious in the management of this design, than which nothing could be of greater importance in order to the success of it. And how was it possible he should give a greater testimony of himself, and withal of the purpose he came about, than he did when he was in the world? The accomplishment of Prophecies, and power of Miracles shewed who he was; the nature of his Doctrine, the manner of his Conversation, the greatness of his Sufferings, shewed what his design was in appearing among men: for they were all managed with a peculiar respect to the convincing mankind, that God was upon terms of mercy with them, and had therefore sent his Son into the world, that he might not only obtain the pardon of sin for those who repent, but eternal life for all them that obey him. And what is there now we can imagine so great and desirable as this, for God to manifest his wisdom in? It is true, we see a great discovery of it in the works of Nature, and might do in the methods of Divine Providence if partiality and interest

rest did not blind our eyes; but both these, though great in themselves, yet fall short of the contrivance of bringing to an eternal happiness man who had fallen from his Maker, and was perishing in his own folly. Yet this is that which men in the pride and vanity of their own imaginations either think not worth considering, or consider as little as if they thought so; and in the mean time think themselves very wise too. The *Jews* had the wisdom of their Traditions which they gloried in, and despised the Son of God himself when he came to alter them. The *Greeks* had the wisdom of their Philosophy which they so passionately admir'd, that whatever did not agree with that, though infinitely more certain and useful, was on that account rejected by them. The *Romans*, after the conquest of so great a part of the World, were grown all such Politicians and Statesmen, that few of them could have leisure to think of another world, who were so busie in the management of this. And some of all these sorts do yet remain in the World, which makes so many so little think of, or admire this infinite discovery of divine Wisdom: nay, there are some who can mix all these together, joyning a
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Jewish obstinacy, with the pride and self-opinion of the *Greeks*, to a *Roman* unconcernedness about the matters of another life. And yet upon a true and just enquiry never any Religion could be found, which could more fully satisfy the expectation of the *Jews*, the reason of the *Greeks*, or the wisdom of the *Romans*, than that which was made known by Christ, who was the *Wisdom of God*, and the *Power of God*. Here the *Jew* might find his *Messias* come, and the Promises fulfilled which related to him; here the *Greek* might find his long and vainly look'd for certainty of a life to come, and the way which leads to it; here the *Roman* might see a Religion serviceable to another world and this together. Here are Precepts more holy, Promises more certain, Rewards more desirable than ever the Wit or Invention of Men could have attained to. Here are Institutions far more pious, useful and serviceable to mankind, than the most admired Laws of the famous Legislators of *Greece* or *Rome*. Here are no popular designs carried on, no vices indulged for the publick interest, which *Solon*, *Lycurgus* and *Plato* are charged with. Here is no making Religion a

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meer trick of State, and a thing only useful for governing the people, which *Numa* and the great men at *Rome* are lyable to the suspicion of. Here is no wrapping up Religion in strange figures and mysterious non-sense, which the *Egyptians* were so much given to. Here is no inhumanity and cruelty in the Sacrifices offer'd, no looseness and profaneness allowed in the most solemn mysteries, no worshipping of such for Gods who had not been fit to live if they had been Men, which were all things so commonly practised in the Idolatries of the Heathens. but the nature of the Worship is such as the minds of those who come to it ought to be, and as becomes that God whom we profess to serve; pure and holy, grave and serious, solemn and devout, without the mixtures of superstition, vanity or ostentation. The precepts of our Religion are plain and easie to be known, very suitable to the nature of Mankind, and highly tending to the advantage of those who practise them, both in this and a better life. The arguments to persuade men are the most weighty and powerful, and of as great importance as the love of God, the death of his Son, the hopes of happiness, and the fears of eternal

eternal misery, can be to men. And wherein is the contrivance of our Religion defective, when the end is so desirable, the means so effectual for the obtaining of it?

2. Which is the next thing to be considered. There are two things which in this degenerate estate of man are necessary in order to the recovery of his happiness; and those are Repentance for sins past, and sincere Obedience for the future: now both these the Gospel gives men the greatest encouragements to, and therefore is the most likely to effect the design it was intended for.

1. For Repentance for sins past. What more powerful motives can there be to persuade men to repent, than for God to let men know that he is willing to pardon their sins upon the sincerity of their Repentance, but without that, there remains nothing but a fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation: that their sins are their follies, and therefore to repent is to grow wise: that he requires no more from men, but what every considerative man knows is fitting to be done whenever he reflects upon his actions: that there can be no greater ingratitude or disingenuity towards the Son

Son of God than to stand at defiance with God when he hath shed his blood to reconcile God and Man to each other: that every step of his humiliation, every part of the Tragedy of his life, every wound at his death, every groan and sigh which he uttered upon the Cross, were designed by him as the most prevailing Rhetorick, to perswade men to forsake their sins, and be happy: that there cannot be a more unaccountable folly, than by impenitency to lose the hopes of a certain and eternal happiness for the sake of those pleasures which every wise man is ashamed to think of: that to continue in sin with the hopes to repent, is to stab a man's self with the hopes of a cure: that the sooner men do it, the sooner they will find their minds at ease, and that the pleasures they enjoy in forsaking their sins, are far more noble and manly than ever they had in committing them: but if none of these arguments will prevail with them, perish they must, and that unavoidably, insupportably, and irrecoverably: And if such arguments as these will not prevail with men to leave their sins, it is impossible that any should.

2. For Holiness of Life: For Christ did

(a) Titus
2. 12.

did not come into the World, and dyed for us, meerly that we should repent of what is past, (a) *by denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, but that we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.* And what he doth expect, he hath given the greatest encouragements to perform: by the clearness of his precepts, the excellency of his own example, the promise of his Grace, and the proposition of eternal rewards and punishments whereby he takes off all the objections men are apt to make against obedience to the Commands of Christ: the pretence of ignorance, because his Laws are so clear; the pretence of impossibility by his own example; the pretence of infirmity by the assistance of his Grace; the pretence of the unnecessariness of so great care of our actions by making eternal rewards and punishments to depend upon it. Let us then reflect upon the whole design of the Gospel, and see how admirably it is suited to the end it was intended for, to the condition of those whose good was design'd by it, and to the whole honour of the great contriver and manager of it. And let not us by our impenitency and the unholiness of our lives, dishonour God and our Saviour.

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reproach our Religion, and condemn that by our lives which we justify by our words. For when we have said all we can, the best and most effectual vindication of Christian Religion is to live according to it: But oh then how unhappy are we that live in such an Age wherein it were hard to know that men were Christians, unless we are bound to believe their words against the tenour and course of their actions! What is become of the purity, the innocency, the candor, the peaceableness, the sincerity and devotion of the Primitive Christians! What is become of their zeal for the honour of Christ and Christian Religion! If it were the design of men, to make our Religion a dishonour and reproach to the *Jews*, *Mahumetans*, and *Heathens*, could they do it by more effectual means than they have done? Who is there that looks into the present state of the Christian World, could ever think that the Christian Religion was so incomparably beyond all others in the world? Is the now *Christian Rome* so much beyond what it was while it was *Heathen*? Nay, was it not then remarkable in its first times for justice, sincerity, contempt of riches, and a kind of generous honesty,

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sty, and who does not (though of the
 same Religion, if he hath any ingenuity
 left) lament the want of all those things
 there now? Will not the sobriety of the
 very *Turks* upbraid our excesses and de-
 baucheries? and the obstinacy of the
Jews in defence and practice of their Re-
 ligion, condemn our coldness and indi-
 ferency in ours? If we have then any
 tenderness for the honour of our Religi-
 on, or any kindness for our own Souls,
 let us not only have the Name, but
 let us lead the lives of Christians, let
 us make amends for all the reproaches
 which our Religion hath suffered by the
 faction and disobedience of some, by the
 Oaths and Blasphemies, the impiety
 and profaneness of others, by the too
 great negligence and carelessness of all,
 that if it be possible, Christianity may
 appear in its true glory, which will then
 only be, when those who name the Name
 of Christ depart from iniquity, and live in
 all manner of holy conversation and god-
 lineess.

SERMON IV.

Preached at

WHITE-HALL.

Romans I. XVI.

For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the Power of God unto salvation to every one that believes, to the Jew first; and also to the Greek.

THese words are uttered by one who was himself a remarkable instance of the truth of the Doctrine contained in them, *viz.* of that divine Power which did accompany the Gospel of Christ. For what can we imagine else should make him now *not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ*, who not long before was not ashamed to persecute all those who professed it? One, whose spirit was fermented with the leaven of the

Pharisees, and intraged with fury against all who owned the name of Christ, is of a sudden turned quite into another temper, to the confusion of those who employed him, and the amazement of them whom he designed to persecute. Nay, so great was the change which was wrought in him, that from a Bigot of the *Jewish* Religion he becomes an Apostle of the *Christian*, and from breathing flames against the Christians, none more ready than he to undergo them for Christ. If he had only given over his persecution, it might have been thought, that he had meerly run himself out of breath, and grown weary of his former fury, (as greater persons than he did afterwards) but to retain the same fervor of spirit in preaching Christ, which he had before in opposing him, to have as great zeal for making Christians, as he had for destroying them, must needs proceed from some great and unusual cause. Whilst the *Jews* thought he had too much learning and interest to become their enemy, and the Christians found he had too much rage and fury to be their friend, even then when they least expected it, instead of continuing an Instrument of the *Sanhedrin* for punishing the Christi-

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ans, he declared himself an Apostle and Servant of Jesus Christ. And that no ordinary one neither: for such was the efficacy of those divine words, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me*, that they not only presently allay his former heat, but quicken and animate him to a greater zeal for the honour of him whom he had persecuted before. And the faster he had run when he was out of his way, the greater diligence he used when he found it, there being none of all the followers of Christ who out-strip him in his constant endeavours to advance the Christian Religion in the World. And if an unwearied diligence to promote it, an uncessant care for preserving it, an universal concern for all who owned it, and an undaunted spirit in bearing the affronts and injuries he underwent for it, be any perswasive arguments of the love a man bears to his Religion, there was never any person who made a clearer demonstration than *St. Paul* did of the truth of his Religion, and his sincerity in embracing it. For his endeavours were suitable to the greatness of his spirit, his care as large as the Horizon of the Sun of righteousness, his courage as great as the malice of his ene-

mies. For he was neither afraid of the Malice of the *Jews*, or of the Wisdom of the *Greeks*, or of the Power of the *Romans*, but he goes up and down preaching the Gospel in a sphere as large as his mind was, and with a zeal only parallel with his former fury. He encountered the *Jews* in their Synagogues, he disputed with the *Greeks* in their most famous Cities, at *Athens*, *Corinth*, *Ephesus*, and elsewhere; and every-where raising some Trophies to the honour of the Gospel: nothing now remained but that he should do the same at *Rome* also. And for that he wants not spirit and resolution, for he even longed to be there, *verf. 11.* nay he had often purposed to go thither, but waited for a convenient opportunity. *v. 13.* But while God was pleased otherwise to dispose of him, he could not conceal the joy which he had for the ready entertainment of the Christian Religion by those to whom he writes, and that their faith was grown as famous as the City wherein they dwelt, *v. 8.* First *I thank my God through Jesus Christ, for you all, that your Faith is spoken of throughout the whole world:* and he further manifests the greatness of his affection to them, *that without ceasing he made men*

tion of them always in his Prayers, v. 9. And among the rest of the blessings he prayed for, for himself and them; he was sure not to forget *his coming to them*, v. 10. Not out of an ambitious and vain-glorious humour that he might be taken notice of in that great and imperial City, but that he might be instrumental in doing them service as he had done others, v. 11. 13. And to this end he tells them, what an obligation lay upon him to spread the Doctrine of Christ in all places and to all persons, v. 14. *I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, to the wise and to the unwise.* So that neither the wisdom of the *Greeks*, nor the ignorance of the *Barbarians* could hinder St. Paul from discovering to them the contrivances of infinite wisdom; and the excellent methods of divine Goodness in order to mens eternal welfare. And although *Rome* now thought it self to be the seat of Wisdom, as well as Empire and Power, yet our Apostle declares *his readiness to preach the Gospel there too*, v. 15. for which he gives a sufficient reason in the words of the Text; *for I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to Salvation, &c.* Wherein we have considerable these two

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things, 1. The Apostle's boldness and freeness in declaring the Doctrine of Christ, *For I am not ashamed, &c.* 2. The ground of it in the following words, *for it is the power of God to Salvation, &c.*

1. The Apostles boldness and freeness in declaring the Doctrine of Christ. It was neither the gallantry of the *Roman* Court, nor the splendor of the City, not the greatness of her Power, or wisdom of her Statesmen could make *St. Paul* entertain the meaner opinion of the doctrine he hoped to preach among them. Had Christ come *μετὰ πολλῆς φαντασίας*, with a great deal of pomp and state into the World, subduing Kingdoms and Nations under him; had *St. Paul* been a General for the Gospel instead of being an Apostle of it, the great men of the World would then allow he had no cause to be ashamed either of his Master, or of his employment. But to preach a crucified Saviour among the glories and triumphs of *Rome*, and a Doctrine of so much simplicity and contempt of the world among those who were the Masters of it, and managed it with so much art and cunning; to persuade them to be followers of Christ in a holy life, who could not be like the gods

gods they worshipped, unless they were guilty of the greatest debaucheries, seems to be an employment so liable to the greatest scorn and contempt, that none but a great and resolved spirit would ever undertake it. For when we consider after so many hundred years profession of Christianity, how apt the greatness of the world is to make men ashamed of the practice of it; and that men aim at a reputation for wit by being able to abuse the Religion they own; what entertainment might we then think our Religion met with among the great men of the Age it was first preached in, when it not only encountered those weaker weapons of scoffs and raillery, but the strong holds of interest and education? If our Religion now can hardly escape the bitter scoffs, and profane jests of men who pawn their souls to be accounted witty, what may we think it suffered then, when it was accounted a part of their own Religion to despise and reproach ours? If in the Age we live in, a man may be reproached for his piety and virtue, that is, for being really a Christian, when all profess themselves to be so, what contempt did they undergo in the first Ages of the Christian World,

World, when the very name of Christian was thought a sufficient brand of infamy? And yet such was the courage and magnanimity of the Primitive Christians, that what was accounted most mean and contemptible in their Religion, viz. their believing in a crucified Saviour, was by them accounted the matter of their greatest honour and glory. For though St. Paul only saith here that *he was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ*, yet elsewhere he explains that *μίσωσις*, which is contained in these words, when he saith, *God forbid that I should glory in any thing, save in the Cross of Christ, by whom the World is crucified to me, and I unto the World*, Gal. 6. 14. i. e. Although he could not but be sensible how much the world despised him, and his Religion together, yet that was the great satisfaction of his mind, that his Religion had enabled him to despise the World as much. For neither the pomp and grandeur of the World, nor the smiles and flatteries of it, no nor its frowns and severities could abate any thing of that mighty esteem and value which he had for the Christian Religion. For in his own expression, *he accounted all things else but loss for the excellency*

cellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, Phil. 3. 8. Which words are not spoken by one who was in despair of being taken notice of for any thing else, and therefore magnifies the Profession he was engaged in; but by a person as considerable as most of the Time and Nation he lived in both for his birth and education. So that his contempt of the World was no sullen and affected severity, but the issue of a sober and impartial judgment; and the high esteem he professed of Christianity was no fanatick whimsey, but the effect of a diligent enquiry, and the most serious consideration. And that will appear,

2. By the grounds and reasons which St. Paul here gives why he was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, 1. From the excellent end it was designed for, and that is no less than *salvation*. 2. From the effectualness of it in order to that end, *it is the power of God to Salvation*. 3. From the necessity of believing the Gospel by all who would attain that end; *to every one that believes, the Jew first, and also to the Greek*.

1. From the excellent End it was designed for, the recovery and happiness of the souls of men, both which are implied

implied in the term *salvation*. For considering the present condition of humane Nature, as it is so far sunk beneath it self, and kept under the power of unruly passions ; whatever tends to make it happy, must do it by delivering it from all those things which are the occasions of its misery. So that whatever Religion should promise to make men happy, without first making them virtuous and good, might on that very account be justly suspected of imposture. For the same reasons which make the acts of any Religion necessary, *viz.* that we may please that God, who commands and governs the World, must make it necessary for men to do it, in those things which are far more acceptable to him than all our sacrifices of what kind soever, which are the actions of true vertue and goodness. If then that accusation had been true, which *Celsus* and *Julian* charged Christianity with, *viz. that it indulged men in the practice of vice, with the promise of a future happiness notwithstanding*; I know nothing could have rendred it more suspicious to be a design to deceive Mankind. But so far is it from having the least foundation of truth in it, that a

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there never was any Religion which gave men such certain hopes of a future felicity, and consequently more encouragement to be good, so there was none ever required it on those strict and severe terms which Christianity doth. For there being two grand duties of men in this world, either towards God in the holiness of their hearts and lives, or towards their Brethren, in a peaceable carriage among men (which cannot be without justice and sobriety) both these are enforced upon all Christians, upon no meaner terms than the unavoidable loss of all the happiness our Religion promises. *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord,* Heb. 12. 14. This is then the grand design of Christianity, to make men happy in another world, by making them good and vertuous in this: It came to reform this world, that it might people another; so to purifie the souls of men, as to make them meet to enjoy the happiness designed for them. This is that *great Salvation* which the Gospel brings to the world, *Heb. 2. 3.* and thence it is called *the Word of Salvation*, Acts 13. 26. *the way of Salvation*, Acts 16. 17. *the Gospel of Salvation*,

an, Ephes. 1. 13. So that though Christianity be of unspeakable advantage to this world, there being no Religion that tends so much to the peace of men's minds, and the preservation of civil Societies as this doth; yet all this it doth by way of subordination to the greater end of it, which is the promoting men's eternal happiness. And the more we consider the vast consequence and importance of this end to Mankind, the greater reason we shall find that St. Paul had, why he should not be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. For can we imagine any end more noble, that any doctrine can aim at than this? Supposing the common principles of all Religion to be true, viz. the Being of God, and Immortality of our Souls, there can be nothing more becoming that God should discover, or those Souls to be employed about, than the way to a blessed immortality. And if we admire those discourses of the Heathen Philosophers, wherein they speak more darkly and obscurely concerning those things, what admiration doth the Gospel deserve, which hath brought life and immortality to light. If we commend the vertuous Heathens who according to those short and obscure

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notices which they had of God and
 themselves, sought to make the world
 any thing the better for their being in
 it, what infinitely greater esteem do
 those blessed Apostles deserve, who ac-
 counted not their own lives dear to them
 that they might make even their enemies
 happy? If those mens memories be dear
 to us who sacrifice their lives and fortunes
 for the sake of the Country they belong
 to, shall not those be much more so who
 have done it for the good of the whole
 world? Such who chearfully suffered death
 while they were teaching men the way
 to an eternal life, and who patiently en-
 dured the flames, if they might but give
 the greater light to the world by them.
 Such who did as far out-go any of the
 admired *Heroes* of the Heathens, as the
 purging the World from sin is of greater
 consequence than cleansing an *Augæan*
Stable from the filth of it, and rescuing
 men from eternal flames is a more noble
 design than clearing a Country from Py-
 rats and Robbers. Nay, most of the
 Heathen Gods who were so solemnly
 worshipped in *Greece* and at *Rome*, owed
 their *ascription* to such slender benefits to
 Mankind; that sure the world was very
 barbarous or hugely gratefull, when
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they could think them no less than God who found out such things for men: I a Smith's forge, and a Woman's distaff; if teaching men the noble arts of fighting and cheating one another were such rare inventions, that they only became some of the most celebrated Deities which the grave and demure *Romans* thought fit to worship; sure St. *Paul* had no cause to be ashamed of his Religion among them, who had so much reason to be ashamed of their own; since his design was to persuade them out of all the vanities and fooleries of their Idolatrous Worship, and to bring them to the service of the true and ever-living God who had discovered so much goodness to the world in making his Son a propitiation for the sins of it. And was not this a discovery infinitely greater and more suitable to the nature of God, than any which the subtilty of the *Greeks*, or wisdom of the *Romans* could ever pretend to concerning any of their Deities? Thus we see the excellent end of our Religion was that which made St. *Paul* so far from being ashamed of it; and so it would do all us too, if we did understand and value it as St. *Paul* did. But it is the great dishonour of too many among

mong us, that they are more ashamed of their Religion than they are of their sins. If to talk boldly against Heaven, to affront God in calling him to witness their great impieties by frequent oaths, to sin bravely and with the highest confidence, to mock at such who are yet more modest in their debaucheries, were not to be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, we might find *St. Pauls* enough in the Age we live in, and it would be a piece of gallantry to be Apostles. But this is rather the utmost endeavour to put Religion out of countenance, and make the Gospel it self blush and be ashamed, that ever such boldfaced impieties should be committed by men under the profession of it, as though they believed nothing so damnable as Repentance and a Holy life, and no sin so unpardonable as Modesty in committing it. But to use *St. Paul's* language when he had been describing such persons himself, *Heb. 6. 9. We are perswaded better things of you, and things that accompany that salvation the Gospel was designed for, though we thus speak.* For certainly nothing can argue a greater meanness of spirit, than while wicked and profane persons are not ashamed of that which unavoidably tends

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to their ruine, and should be shy of the profession and practice of that which conduces to their eternal happiness. What is become of all that magnanimity and generous spirit which the Primitive Christians were so remarkable for, if while some are impudent in sinning, others are ashamed of being or doing good? If we have that value for our immortal souls, and a future life, which we ought to have, we shall not trouble our selves much with the Atheistical scoffs and drollery of profane persons, who while they deride and despise Religion, do but laugh themselves into eternal misery. And thus much for the first ground of *St. Paul's* confidence, *viz.* The excellent end the Gospel was design'd for.

2. The effectualness of it in order to that end. *It is the Power of God to salvation.* Wherein two things are imply'd.

1. The inefficacy of any other doctrine for that end.

2. The effectualness of the Gospel in order to it.

1. The inefficacy of any other Doctrine for this end of promoting the eternal salvation of Mankind. If the world had been acquainted with any doctrine before which had been sufficient for the
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purposes the Gospel was designed for, there wou'd have been no such necessity of propagating it among men ; nor had there been reason enough to have justified the Apostles in exposing themselves to so great hazards for the preaching of it. If the notion of an eternal God and Providence, without the knowledge of a *Saviour*, had been sufficient to reform the World, and make men happy ; it had not been consistent with the wisdom or goodness of God to have imploy'd so many persons, with the loss of their lives, to declare the doctrine of Christ to the World. So that if Christianity be true, it must be thought necessary to salvation, for the necessity of it was declared by those who were the instruments of confirming the truth of it. I meddle not with the case of those particular persons who had no means or opportunity to know God's revealed will , and yet from the Principles of Natural Religion did reform their lives, in hopes of a future felicity (if any such there were) but whether there were not a necessity of such a Doctrine as the Gospel is to be discover'd to the world, in order to the reformation of it ? For some very few persons either through

the goodness of their natures, the advantage of their education, or some cause of a higher nature, may have led more virtuous lives than others did; but it is necessary, that what aims at the general good of Mankind, must be suited to the capacities of all, and enforced with arguments which may prevail on any but the most obstinate and wilful persons. But when we consider the state of the World at that time when Christianity was first made known to it, we may easily see how insufficient the common Principles of Religion were from working a reformation in it, when notwithstanding them mankind was so generally lapsed into Idolatry and Vice, that hardly any can be instanced in in the Heathen World, who had escaped both of them. And there was so near an affinity between both these, that they who were engaged in the rites of their Idolatry, could hardly keep themselves free from the intanglements of vice; not only because many of their villanies were practised as part of their Religion, (and there was little hopes certainly of their being good, who could not be Religious without being bad) but because the very Gods they worship were represented to be as bad as them.

themselves. And could they take any better measure of Vertue, than from the actions of those whom they supposed to have so divine an excellency in them, as to deserve their adoration? So that if there were a design of planting wickedness in the world (which need not be, for it grows fast enough without it) it could not be done more successfully than by worshipping those for Gods, who did such things which good men would abhor to think of. And yet this was the state of the world then, when the Gospel was preached, and not only of the more rude and barbarous Nations, but of the most civiliz'd and knowing people, as the *Romans* themselves; as our Apostle at large proves in the remainder of this chapter, wherein he shews, that though they had means enough of knowing the Eternal God and Providence, yet they were so fallen into Idolatry, and the most vicious practices, that there was no means of recovering them, but by a fuller discovery both of the justice and goodness of God.

I know it will be here objected, that though the generality of men were bad then (as when were they otherwise) yet the Heathens had a kind of Apostles a-

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mong them, *viz.* the Philosophers, who sought to amend the manners of men by the moral instructions they gave them, so that if men were bad, it was not for want of good counsel, but for not observing it, which is all (they say) we have to say for our selves, when we are charged with the great debaucheries of the Christian world.

To which I answer, That our business is not now to enquire whether there hath not been an incomparably greater advantage to the world by Christianity, in the reforming mens lives, than ever was by any of the *Heathen Morals*; but whether these, taking them in the fairest dress, were so sufficient for the bringing men to eternal happiness, that there needed not any such Doctrine as Christianity, be published for that end? And there are two great things we may charge the best of their discourses with an insufficiency in, for the accomplishment of this end, which are Certainty, and Motives, or the want of Arguments to believe, and Encouragements to practise.

1. They were destitute of sufficient certainty; for what a man ventures his eternal state upon, he ought to be well assured of the truth of it. But how was it

it possible for the World to be reform'd by such wise Apostles (if they must be called so) who are perpetually disputing among themselves about those things which were the most necessary foundations of all Vertue and Religion? As though the best Arguments they had to prove their Souls immortal, was because their Disputes about them were so. And those seemed among them to gain the greatest reputation for Wit, who were best able to dispute against common Principles; and they managed their business with greatest advantage, who only shewed the weakness of others principles, but established none of their own; which was an unavoidable consequence of the way they proceeded in, for offering at no such way of proof as Christianity doth, they rather taught Men to dispute, than to live eternally. Besides, their discourses were too subtile and intricate for the common capacities of Men; how long might a Man live before an *Entelechia* would make him know the nature of his soul the better, or an *αὐτογνωσία* perswade him to believe its immortality? Insomuch that it is hard to determine, whether the arguments used by them, did not rather hinder as-

sent, than perswade to it? and it seems probable that the honest minded illiterate Heathens believed those things more firmly than the greatest Philosophers. For plain truths lose much of their weight, when they are rarify'd into subtilties, and their strength is impaired when they are spun into too fine a thread. The arguments which must prevail with Mankind, must be plain and evident, easie and yet powerful. The natural sense of good and evil in Men is oft-times dulled by disputes, and only awakned by a powerful representation of an infinite Being, and a future Judgment: and that by such a way of proof as all persons are equal Judges of the truth and validity of it; such as the Resurrection of Christ is in the Gospel.

2. But let us suppose the arguments certain and suitable, yet what sufficient motives or encouragements could they give to lead a holy and vertuous life, who after all their endeavours to perswade others, remain'd so uncertain themselves as to a future happiness? So *Tully* tells us of *Socrates* himself when he was just dying, *That he told his friends, that only the Gods knew whether it was fitter for men to live or die, but he thought no man did.*

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And although some would excuse this as his usual way of disputing, yet of all times one would think it was fittest for him then to declare his mind in the most exprefs terms, not only for the full vindication of himself, but for the comfort and encouragement of his friends. We are sure, Christianity proceeds on those terms, that if a future happiness be supposed uncertain, it declares expressly there can be no sufficient reason given for men to part with the conveniencies of this present life; nay, it supposes *the best men to be the most miserable of all others, if there be not a future reward,* 1 Cor. 15. 19. — 32. Again, what probability was there they should ever persuade the World to vertue and goodness, when the severest of the Philosophers, made it lie in things so repugnant to humane nature, as goodness is agreeable to it. As when they made it an equal fault for a man to be angry, and to murder his Sovereign; and that all passions are to be destroy'd, that pain and grief are nothing, that vertue in all conditions is a sufficient reward to it self: Which are so contrary to the common sense of Mankind, that the only way to persuade men to believe them,

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is first to perswade them they are not men. So that he was certainly the wisest man among the Heathens, who concluded, *that we ought to expect a higher Master to teach us these things*, and to acquaint us with the happiness of a future life. And hereby an answer may be given to *Porphyries* grand objection against Christian Religion, *viz. If it were so necessary for the good of Mankind, why was it so long before it was discovered*. Because God would thereby discover the insufficiency of all the means the wit of man could find out to reform the world, without this. That not only the *Jews* might see the weakness of that dispensation they were under, but the *Gentile* world might groan with an expectation of some more powerfull means to goodness than were yet among them. For when Philosophy had been so long in its height, and had so little influence upon Mankind, it was time for the Son of righteousness to arise, and with the softning and healing influence of his beams to bring the World to a more virtuous temper.

And that leads to the Second thing implied, which is the peculiar efficacy of the Gospel for promoting mens salvation

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tion, *for it is the power of God to Salvation*, and that will appear, by considering how many ways *the power of God* is engaged in it. These three especially.

1. In confirmation of the Truth of it.
2. In the admirable Effects of it in the World.
3. In the divine Assistance which is promised to those who embrace it.

1. In confirmation of the Truth of it. For the World was grown so uncertain, as to the grand foundations of Religion, that the same power was requisite now to settle the World, which was at first for the framing of it. For though the Precepts of Christian Religion be pure and easie, holy and suitable to the sense of Mankind, though the Promises be great and excellent, proportionable to our wants and the weight of our business, though the reward be such that it is easier to desire than comprehend it, yet all these would but seem to baffle the more the expectations of men, unless they were built on some extraordinary evidence of divine power. And such we assert there was in the confirmation of these things to us, not only in the miraculous birth of our Saviour, and that continual series of unparallel'd miracles

racles in his life, not only in the most obliging circumstances of his death; not only in the large effusion of divine gifts upon his Apostles, and the strange propagation of Christian Religion by them against all humane power; but that which I shall particularly instance in, as the great effect of divine power, and confirmation of our Religion, was his Resurrection from the dead. For, as our Apostle saith, *Rom. i. 4. Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the Resurrection from the dead.* No way of evidence could be more suitable to the capacities of all, than this, it being a plain matter of fact; none ever better attested than this was, not only by the unanimous consent of all the witnesses, but by their constant adhering to the truth of it, though it cost almost all of them their lives; and no greater evidence could be given to the World of a divine power, since both *Jews* and *Gentiles* agreed in this, that such a thing could not be effected but by an immediate hand of God. So far were they then from thinking a resurrection possible by the juice of herbs, or an infusion of warm blood into the veins, or by the
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breath of living Creatures, as the great Martyr for *Atheism* would seem from *Pliny* to persuade us; when yet certainly nothing can be of higher concernment to those who believe not another life, than to have tried this experiment long ere now; and since nothing of that nature hath ever happened since our Saviour's resurrection, it only lets us know what credulous men in other things the greatest Infidels as to Religion are. But so far were they at that time from so fond an imagination, that they readily yielded, that none but God could do it, tho' they seem'd to question whether God himself could do it or no. As appears by the Apostle's Interrogation, *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?* Act. 26. 8. This was therefore judged on both sides to be a matter of so great importance, that all the disputes concerning Christian Religion were resolved into this, Whether Christ were risen from the dead? And this the Apostles urge and insist on, upon all occasions, as the great evidence of the truth of his Doctrine, and this was the main part of their Commission, for they were sent abroad to be *witnesses of his Resurrection*. Which

Which was not designed by God as a thing strange and incredible to puzzle Mankind with, but to give the highest assurance imaginable to the World of the truth and importance of Christianity. Since God was pleased to imploy his power in so high a manner to confirm the certainty of it.

2. God's power was seen in the admirable effects of Christian Religion upon the minds of men: which was most discernable by the strange alteration it soon made in the state of the world. In *Judæa* soon after the death of Christ, some of his Crucifiers become Christians, 3000 Converts made at one Sermon of St. *Peter's*, and great accessions made afterwards both in *Hierusalem* and other places. Yea in all parts of the *Roman* Empire, where the Christians came, they so increased and multiplied, that thereby it appeared that God had given a Benediction to his new Creation suitable to what he gave to the first. So that within the compass of not a hundred years after our Saviour's death, the World might admire to see it self so strangely changed from what it was. The Temple at *Hierusalem* destroy'd, and the *Jews* under a sadder dispersion than

than ever, and rendred uncapable of continuing their former Worship of God there: the Heathen Temples unfrequented, the Gods derided, the Oracles ceased, the Philosophers puzzled, the Magistrates disheartned by their fruitless cruelties, and all this done by a few Christians who came and preached to the World *Righteousness, Temperance, and a Judgment to come*, whereof God had given assurance to the World, by raising one *Jesus* from the dead. And all this effected not by the power of Wit and Eloquence, not by the force and violence of rebellious subjects, not by men of hot and giddy brains, but by men sober, just, humble and meek in all their carriages, but withal such as might never have been heard of in the world, had not this Doctrine made them famous. What could this then be imputed to less than a Divine Power, which by effectual and secret ways carries on its own design against all the force and wit of men. So that the wise *Gamaliel*, at whose feet *St. Paul* was bred, seem'd to have the truest apprehensions of these things at that time, when he told the *Sanhedrin*, *If this counsel, or this work be of men, it will come to nought, but if it be of God, ye cannot*

cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be
found to fight against God. Act. 5.
38, 39.

3. In the Divine Assistance which is
promised to those who embrace it: in
which respect it is properly *the power of
God to salvation*; and therein far beyond
what the Philosophers could promise to
any who embraced their opinions. For,
the Gospel doth not only discover the
necessity of a Principle superiour to Na-
ture, which we call *Grace*, in order to
the fitting our souls for their future hap-
piness, but likewise shews on what terms
God is pleased to bestow it on men, *viz.*
on the consideration of the death and
passion of our Lord and Saviour. Not
*by works of righteousness which we have
done, but according to his mercy he saved
us by the washing of regeneration, and re-
newing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed
on us abundantly through Christ our Savi-
our, Titus 3. 5.* There being nothing in
humane nature which could oblige God,
to give to Mankind that assistance of his
grace whereby they are enabled to work
out this salvation the Gospel is designed
for, with fear and trembling. The whole
tenor of the Gospel importing a divine
power which doth accompany the
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preaching of it, which is designed on purpose to heal the wounds, and help the weakness of our depraved and degenerate nature. Through which we may be *kept to salvation*: but it must be *through Faith*, 1 Pet. 1. 5.

3. Which is the last particular of the words; the necessity of *believing the Gospel* in order to the partaking of the salvation promised in it; *it is the power of God to salvation to every one that believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek*. An easie way of salvation, if no more were required to mens happiness but a fancy and strong opinion which they will easily call Believing. So there were some in St. *Augustin's* time, I could wish there were none in ours, who thought nothing necessary to salvation but a strong Faith, let their lives be what they pleased. But this is so repugnant to the main design of Christian Religion, that they who think themselves the strongest Believers, are certainly the weakest, and most ungrounded. For they believe scarce any other proposition in the new Testament, but that *who-soever believeth shall be saved*. If they did believe that Christ came into the

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world to reform it, and make it better, that *the wrath of God is now revealed from Heaven against all unrighteousness*, as well as that *the just by Faith shall live*, that the design of all that love of Christ, which is shewn to the World, is to deliver them from the hand of their enemies, that they might serve him in righteousness and holiness all the days of their lives, they could never imagine, that salvation is entailed by the Gospel on a mighty confidence or vehement perswasion of what Christ hath done and suffer'd for them. And so far is St. Paul from asserting this, that as far as I can see, he never meddles with a matter of that nicety, whether a single act of Faith be the condition of our justification as it is distinguished from Evangelical obedience, but his discourse runs upon this subject; whether God will pardon the sins of men upon any other terms than those which are declared in the Christian Religion, the former he calls *Works*, and the latter *Faith*.

I know, the subtilty of later times hath made St. Paul dispute in the matter of justification, not as one bred up at the feet of Gamaliel, but of the Master of the

Sentences; but men did not then understand their Religion at all the worse because it was plain and easie; and, it may be, if others since had understood their Religion better, there would never have needed so much subtilty to explain it, nor so many distinctions to defend it. The Apostle makes the same terms of justification and of salvation, for as he saith elsewhere, *(a) We are justified by* (a) Rom. *Faith*, he saith here, *the Gospel is the* 5. 1. *power of God to Salvation to every one that believes*; if therefore a single act of Faith be sufficient for one, why not for the other also? But if believing here be taken in a more large and comprehensive sense, as a complex act relating to our undertaking the conditions of the Gospel; why should it not be taken so in the subsequent discourse of the Apostle? For we are to observe that *St. Paul* in this Epistle is not disputing against any sort of Christians that thought to be saved by their obedience to the Gospel from the assistance of divine grace; but against those who thought the Grace and indulgence of the Gospel by no means necessary in order to the pardon of their sins, and their eternal happiness. Two things

therefore the Apostle mainly designs to prove in the beginning of it : First, the insufficiency of any other way of salvation besides that offer'd by the Gospel; whether it were the light of Nature which the *Gentiles* contended for, but were far from living according to it; or that imaginary *Covenant of Works*, which the *Jews* fancied to themselves (for it will be a very hard matter to prove that ever God entred into a Covenant of Works with fallen Man, which he knew it was impossible for him to observe) but they were so highly opinionated of themselves, and of those legal observations which were among them, that they thought by vertue of them they could merit so much favour at God's hands, that there was no need of any other sacrifice, but what was among themselves to expiate the guilt of all their sins. And on that account they rejected the Gospel, as the Apostle tells us, (a) *that they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.* Against these therefore the Apostle proves, that if they hoped for happiness upon such strict terms

(a) Rom.
10. 3.

terms, they laid only a foundation of
 (a) *boasting* if they did all which God (a) Rom.
 required, but of misery if they did not; 3. 27.
 for then (b) *Cursed is every one that con-* (b) Gal. 3.
tinues not in every thing written in the 10.
Law to do it, i. e. if they failed in any
 one thing, then they must fail of all their
 hopes; but such a state of perfection be-
 ing impossible to humane Nature, he
 shews, that either all Mankind must un-
 avoidably perish, or they must be saved
 by the Grace and Favour of God, which
 he proves to be discovered by the Go-
 spel: and that God will now accept of a
 hearty and sincere obedience to his will
 declared by his Son; so that all those
 who perform that, though they live not
 in the nice observance of the Law of *Mo-*
ses, shall not need to fear the penalty of
 their sins in another life. Which is the
 second thing he designs to prove, *viz.*
 That those who obeyed the Gospel, whe-
 ther *Jew* or *Greek*, were equally capable
 of salvation by it. (c) *For*, saith he, *is* (c) Rom.
God the God of the Jews only? is he not 3. 29.
also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles
also: because both *Jew* and *Gentile* were
 to be justified upon the same terms, as he
 proves afterwards. So that Gods justifying

fyng of us by the Gospel, is the solem declaration of himself upon what terms he will pardon the sins of men; that is deliver them from the penalties they have deserved by them. For the actual discharge of the person is reserved to the great day; all the justification we have here is only declarative from God, but so as to give a right to us, by virtue whereof we are assured, that God will not only not exercise his utmost rigour but shew all favour and kindness to those who by belief of the Gospel do repent and obey. God doth now remit sin as he forbears to punish it; he remits the sinner as he assures him by the death of Christ he will not punish upon his repentance; but he fully remits both when he delivers the person upon the tryal of the great day, from all the penalties which he hath deserved by his sins. So that our compleat justification and salvation go both upon the same terms, and the same Faith which is sufficient for one, must be sufficient for the other also.

What care then ought men to take lest by mis-understanding the notion of Believing, so much spoken of as the condition

dition of our salvation, they live in a neglect of that holy obedience which the Gospel requires, and so believe themselves into eternal misery. But as long as men make their obedience necessary, though but as the fruit and effect of Faith, it shall not want its reward: for those, *whose hearts are purified by Faith* shall never be condemned for mistaking the notion of it; and they who live as those that are to be judged according to *their works*, shall not miss their reward, though they do not think they shall receive it *for them*. But such who make no other condition of the Gospel but Believing, and will scarce allow that to be called a Condition, ought to have a great care to keep their hearts sounder than their heads, for their only security will lie in this, that they are good though they see no necessity of being so. And such of all others, I grant, have reason to acknowledge the irresistible power of Divine Grace, which enables them to obey the will of God against the dictates of their own judgments. But thanks be to God, who hath so abundantly provided for all the infirmities of humane Nature, by the large offers of his Grace, and assistance

stance of his Spirit , that though we meet with so much opposition without, and so much weakness within, and so many discouragements on every side of us ; yet if we sincerely apply our selves to do the will of God, we have as great assurance as may be, that *we shall be kept by the power of God through Faith unto Salvation.*

SER-

SERMON V.

Preached at

WHITE-HALL.

Hebrews II. 3.

*How shall we escape, if we neglect so
great salvation?*

When the wise and eternal Coun-
sels of Heaven concerning the
salvation of Mankind by the
death of the Son of God, were first de-
clared to the World by his own appea-
rance and preaching in it: nothing could
be more reasonably expected, than that
the dignity of his Person, the authority
of his Doctrine, and the excellency of
his Life, should have perswaded those
whom he appeared among, to such an
admiration of his Person, and belief of
his Doctrine, as might have led them to
an imitation of him in the holiness of his
life and conversation. For if either the
worth

worth of the Person, or the Importance of the Message might prevail any thing towards a kind and honourable reception among men; there was never any person appeared in any degree comparable to him; never any Message declared which might challenge so welcome an entertainment from men, as that was which he came upon. If to give Mankind the highest assurance of a state of life and immortality, if to offer the pardon of sin, and reconciliation with God upon the most easie and reasonable terms, if to purge the degenerate World from all its impurities by a Doctrine as holy as the Author of it; were things as becoming the Son of God to reveal, as the Sons of men to receive: nothing can be more unaccountable than that his Person should be despised, his Authority slighted, and his Doctrine contemned. And that by those whose interest was more concerned in the consequence of these things, than himself could be in all the affronts and injuries he underwent from men: For the more the indignities, the greater the shame, the sharper the sufferings which he did undergo, the higher was the honour and glory which he was advanced to: but the more obliging
the

the instances of his kindness were, the greater the salvation that was tendered by him, the more prevailing the motives were for the entertainment of his Doctrine, the more exemplary and severe will the punishment be of all those who reject it. For it is very agreeable to those eternal Laws of Justice by which God governs the world, that the punishment should arise proportionably to the greatness of the mercies despised: and therefore although the Scripture be very sparing in telling us what the state of those persons shall be in another life who never heard of the Gospel; yet for those who do, and despise it, it tells us plainly, that an eternal misery is the just desert of those to whom an eternal happiness was offered, and yet neglected by them. And we are the rather told of it, that men may not think it a surprize in the life to come; or that if they had known the danger, they would have escaped it; and therefore our Blessed Saviour, who never mention'd punishment but with a design to keep men from it, declares it frequently, that the punishment of those persons and places would be most intolerable, who have received, but not improved the light of the Gospel:
and

(a) Matth.
21. 23.

and that it would be more (a) tolerable for the persons who had offered violence to Nature, and had Hell-fire burning in their hearts by their horrid impurities, than for those who heard the Doctrine, and saw the Miracles of Christ, and were much the worse, rather than any thing the better for it. But lest we should think that all this black scene of misery was only designed for those who were the Actors in that dolefull Tragedy of our Saviour's sufferings: we are told by those who were best able to assure us of it, that the same dismal consequences will attend all the affronts of his Doctrine, as if they had been offered to his own person. For it is nothing but the common flattery and self-deceit of humane nature, which makes any imagine, that though they do not now either believe or obey the Gospel; they should have done both, if they had heard our Saviour speak as never man spake, and seen him do what never man did: For the same disposition of mind which makes them now slight that Doctrine *which is delivered to them by them that heard him*, would have made them slight the Person as well as the Doctrine, if they had heard it from himself. And there.

therefore it is but reasonable that the same punishment should belong to both; especially since God hath provided so abundantly for the assurance of our Faith, by the miraculous and *powerfull demonstration of that divine spirit* which did accompany those who were the first publishers of this Doctrine to the world. And therefore the Author of this Epistle, after he hath in the words of the Text declared, that it is impossible to escape, if we *neglect the great salvation* offered us by the Gospel; in the following words he gives us that account of it, *that at first it began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by them that heard him: God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will.* So that the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, falling upon the Apostles, and the many signs and wonders which were wrought by them, were the great testimony of God to the world, that these were the persons imployed by himself to declare that Doctrine whereon the eternal salvation of Mankind did depend. And since we have so lately acknowledged the truth of this testimony which God gave to the Apostles,

Apostles, by the solemn celebration of that glorious descent of the *Holy Ghost* upon them on the day of Pentecost, that which naturally follows from it is, the great care we ought to take, lest we be found guilty of *neglecting that great salvation* which is offered to us in that Doctrine which was attested in so eminent a manner *by God himself*; and that from the consideration of our own danger; *for how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?* wherein are three things considerable:

1. The care God hath taken to make us happy, by offering *so great salvation* to us.

2. The care we ought to take in order to our own happiness, *not to neglect* the offers which God hath made us.

3. The unavoidable punishment which those do incur who are guilty of this neglect. *How shall we escape?*

I need not tell this Auditory how forcible the Negative is, which is expressed by such an interrogation which appeals to the judgment of all who hear it, and so relies not upon the bare authority of the speaker, but upon the plain evidence of the thing, which others were judges of as well as himself. As though he had said,

said, if you slight and disesteem the Gospel of Christ, upon whatever grounds ye do it, if either through too great an opinion of the wisdom of this world you despise it as vain and useless, if through too mean an opinion of the excellency of Christianity, you reject it either as uncertain in its Theory, or impossible in its Practice; or if through too great a love of the pleasures of sin, or a secure and careless temper of mind, you regard not the doing what Christianity requires to make you happy; think with your selves, what way you can find to escape the wrath of God; for my part, I know of none; for if God were so severe against the violation of a far meaner institution, viz. of the Law of Moses, inso-much that every contempt and disobedience did receive a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape who neglect so great salvation? or as the Apostle elsewhere argues to the same purpose. (a) *He that despised Moses Law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment suppose ye shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the Covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto* the

(a) Heb. 10. 28, 29.

the Spirit of Grace? This is a sad subject, but I am afraid too necessary to be spoken to in the Age we live in; where in men seem to be in apprehensive of the danger of inwardly despising the Religion they profess to own, and the neglecting of that which they hope to be saved by. It is strange that it should be so, but much more strange that men should think to do so, and not be called to an account for it. It is not only the gross and open sinner, that defies Heaven, and by his oaths and blasphemies dares God to shew his Power and Justice upon him; but the sly and self-deceiving hypocrite, that hates Religion while he thinks he loves it; that in his heart condemns it, but is afraid to know that he does so, that ought to be possessed with a truer sense of Religion, and a greater dread of the issue of the contempt or neglect of it. There is some appearance of ingenuity in an open enmity; but none so dangerous as that which hides it self under the disguise of friendship. In our Saviour's time there were several sorts of those who shewed their dis-esteem of him, some that were so enraged against him, that they contrive all ways for his disgrace and punishment, others could hear him

with

with patience, (a) *but the cares of this* (a) Mark
World, the deceitfulness of Riches, and 4. 19.
the lust of other things choaked and stifled
all good apprehensions of him, that they
became weak and ineffectual. And those
were guilty of making light of the mar-
riage-feast because of other business which
they had to mind, *Matth. 22. 5.* as well as
those who offered all the injuries and af-
fronts to his servants that invited them,
v. 6. And as it was in the days of our
Saviour, so it is now; *some were eating*
and drinking, minding nothing but the
vain and sensual pleasures of the world;
some were buying and selling, so busie in
this world, that they had no leasure to
think of being happy in another; some
were deriding and blaspheming; but all
these too wise, or too vain, or too profane
to mind the offers of eternal salvation.
I wish we could say it were otherwise
now, that a sensual and voluptuous, an
easie and a careless life in some, that am-
bition and the restless pursuit after the
honour and riches of the world in others,
that a profane wit, and a contempt of
all that is serious in those that think them-
selves too great to be Religious, did not
enervate the force of Christianity up-
on their minds, and make them all,

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though

though upon different grounds, agree in the neglect of their own salvation. But the case of such men grown so desperate that no remedy can work upon them hath the love of sin and the world so far intoxicated them, that no reason or consideration whatever can awaken them. Have they hardened themselves against all the power of divine Truths with resolution as strong as death, and as cruel as the grave whither they are going? Will neither the love of happiness, nor the fear of misery, their own interest and the wisdom of avoiding so great danger, the dread of the Majesty and Power of God, and the horror of the great day, prevail at least so far on men to consider, whether these things be true or no; and if they be, what unspeakable folly it is to neglect them? And that better to make that appear, I shall prove these following things:

1. That God by the Gospel hath taken so great care of mens happiness, that nothing but a gross neglect can make them miserable.

2. That nothing can be more unreasonable, than when God hath taken so much care of it, men should neglect themselves.

3. That

3. That it is very just for God to vindicate himself against so gross a neglect, by the severe punishments of the life to come.

1. That God by the Gospel hath taken so great care of mens salvation, that nothing but a gross neglect can make them miserable. For, whatever the mind of man can imagine necessary in order to its own happiness, in its present fallen and degenerate condition, is abundantly provided for by the Gospel of Christ. For, man was so wholly lost as to his own felicity, that among the ruins and decays of his Nature, he could not pick up so much as the perfect Image and Idea of his own happiness; when he reflects upon himself, he finds himself such a confused mass of folly and weakness, that he can never imagine that so noble a design should have its ground-work laid upon so coarse a Being. And rather than believe the foundation of his happiness to be within himself, there is nothing so vain and trifling without him, but he is ready to fall down before it, and cry out, Here I place my felicity. Sometimes he admires the brave shews, and the Pomp and Gallantry of the World, and thinks nothing comparable to a glorious out-

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side,

side, and a great train of attendants; sometimes he raises himself, and flutters upon the wings of a popular Air, till a cross blast comes and leaves him in the common rout: sometimes his eyes are dazzled with the glory of the more refined and solid pieces of that Earth on which he was framed, and thinks it reasonable, that the softness of flesh and blood, should yield to the impressions of silver and gold; sometimes he even envies the pleasures of the Brutes, and if it were possible would outdo them in the grossest sensualities: sometimes again he flatters himself, and then adores his own imperfections, and thinks his Passions, Honour; and his Profaneness, Wit. So far a vain man from making himself happy, that the first step to it, is to make himself understand what it is to be so. But supposing that the true image of his happiness should drop down from Heaven, and by the place from whence it fell, should conclude where the thing it is to be found; yet this were only to make him more miserable, unless he withal knew how to come thither. It is sure not to climb up to it by the top of the highest mountains, nor to be carried thither upon the wings of a mighty

wind, he hath no fiery Chariots at his command to ascend with to the Glories above : but only he *that maketh his Angels Spirits, and his Ministers a flame of fire*, is able to preserve the souls of men from vanishing into the soft air, and to conduct them to the Mansions of eternal Bliss. It is he only that can make them capable of the Joys of another life, by purging them from the stains and the pollutions of this. And therefore without his grace and favour ever to hope for the happiness of Heaven, must be by fancying a Heaven to be there, where there is no God. So that it is necessary, that the Proposals of this salvation must come from the Author of it, and that with such arguments as may persuade men of the truth of it, and with such motives as may encourage men to accept of them. Now the Gospel of Christ affords us all these things which are necessary to our happiness ; there we have the most agreeable and settled notion and Idea of it, the most large and free offers of divine goodness in order to it, the greatest assurance that these things did immediately proceed from God, and the most encouraging motives to accept of

these offers in order to that great salvation which is tendred to us.

1. We have the most agreeable and settled notion of true happiness: not such a mean and uncertain thing which lies at the mercy of the continual vicissitudes and contingencies of this present state, but that which is able to bear up the mind of man against all the troubles of this life, and to carry him to a Region beyond them all, where there is a fulness of joy without an alloy of sadness after it, and ever-flowing rivers of pleasures that need no dams to make them rise higher, nor falls to make their motion perceived. Our Blessed Saviour never flatters his followers with the expectation of a felicity in this life; Contentment is the most he hath promised them and that they may enjoy, if they follow his directions, let this world be what it will, and do what it pleases with them. He never tells his Disciples they may have satisfaction here if they lie upon their beds of Down with their heads full of tormenting cares, that the pleasure of humane life lies in the gratifications of the senses, and in making what use they can of the world; he never deceives them
with

with the promise of so poor a happiness as that which depends upon health, friends, prosperity, and having our own wills. No, but he tells them of a more noble and generous felicity, that will preserve its own state and grandeur in spite of the world; a happiness consistent with loss of Estate, loss of Friends, with affronts and injuries, with persecutions, and death it self. For when our Saviour begins to discourse of happiness, what another kind of strain doth he speak of it in, than any of those *Philosophers* who have so much obstructed the happiness of mans life by their voluminous writings and contentions about it. Here we meet with no *Epicurean* softness, which the sense of true Vertue carried the minds of the more noble Heathens above; no rigid and incredible *Stoical* Paradoxes, that make men only happy by the change of names; no *Aristotelian* supposition of a prosperous life for Vertue to shew its power in; but here the only supposition made, is that which lies in a mans own breast, viz true goodness; and then let his condition be what it will, his happiness is consistent with it. For those above all other persons whom our Saviour calls Blessed, in the beginning of that excel-

lent Abstract of Christianity, his Sermon on the Mount, are, not the rich and great men of the world, but those who to the

(a) Matth.
5. 3.

poverty of their condition add that (a) *of their spirits* too, by being contented with the state they are in; not those who are full of mirth and jollity, that laugh away one half of their time, and

(b) V. 4.

sleep the rest; but they who are (b) *in a mournful condition*, either by reason of their own sorrows, or out of compassion to others, or out of a general sense of their own imperfections, or the inconstancy of our present state: Not those, who are ready enough to give, but unable to bear affronts, that think the lives of men a sacrifice small enough for any words of disgrace which they have given them; but

(c) V. 5.

(c) *the meek and patient spirit*, that is neither apt to provoke, nor in a rage and madness when it is; that values the rules of Christianity above all the barbarous Pursuits of Honour. Not those, who are as impetuous in the pursuit of their designs, and as eager of tasting the fruit of them, as the thirsty Traveller in the sands of *Arabia* is of drinking the water of a pleasant Spring: but such who make

(d) V. 6.

(d) *righteousness and goodness* their meat and drink, that which they hunger and thirst for.

thirst after, and take as much pleasure in as the most voluptuous *Epicure* in his greatest dainties : Not those, whose malice goes beyond their power, and want only enough of that to make the whole World a Slaughter-house, and account racks and torments among the necessary instruments of governing the World ; (a) but such, who when their enemies are in their power, will not torment themselves by cruelty to them, but have such a sense of common humanity, as not only to commend pity and good nature to those above them, but to use it to those who are under them. Not those whose hearts are as full of dissimulation and hypocrisie, as the others hands are of blood and violence, that care not what they are, so they may but seem to be good : but such whose inward integrity and (b) *purity of heart*, far exceeds the outward shew and profession of it : who honour Goodness for it self, and not for the Glory which is about the head of it. Not those, who never think the breaches of the world wide enough till there be a door large enough for their own interests to go in at by them ; that would rather see the world burning, than one peg be taken out of their Chariot-wheels ; But such who would

(a) V. 7.

(b) V. 8.

- would sacrifice themselves, like the brave
- (a) V. 9. *(a) Roman*, to fill up the wide gulf which mens contentions have made in the world, and think no Legacy ought to be preferred more inviolable than that of *Peace*, which our Saviour left to his Disciples. Lastly, not those, who will do any thing rather than suffer, or if they *suffer* it shall be for any thing rather than (b) *righteousness*, to uphold a party, or maintain a discontented faction; but such, who never complain of the hardness of their way, as long as they are sure it is that of Righteousness; but if they meet with reproaches and persecutions in it, they welcome them, as the harbingers of their future reward, the expectation of which makes the worst condition not only tolerable but easie to them. Thus we see what kind of happiness it is, which the Gospel promises; not such a one as rises out of the dust, or is tost up and down with the motion of it; but such whose never-failing fountain is above, and whither those small rivulets return, which fall down upon Earth to refresh the minds of men in their passage thither; but while they continue here, as the *Jews* say of the water that came out of the *rock*, it follows them while they travel through this wilderness below. So that the foundation

ation of a Christians happiness is the expectation of a life to come, which expectation having so firm a bottom, as the assurance which Christ hath given us by his death and sufferings, it hath power and influence sufficient to bear up the minds of men, against all the vicissitudes of this present state.

2. We have the most large and free offers of divine Goodness in order to it. Were it as easie for Man to govern his own passions, as to know that he ought to do it; were the impressions of Reason and Religion as powerful with Mankind as those of Folly and Wickedness are, we should never need complain much of the misery of our present state, or have any cause to fear a worse to come. There would then be no condition here but what might be born with satisfaction to ones own mind; and the life one day led according to the principles of virtue and goodness would be preferred before a sinning Immortality. But we have lost the command of our selves, and therefore our passions govern us; and as long as such furies drive us, no wonder if our ease be little. When men began first to leave the uncertain speculations of Nature, and found themselves so out of order

(a) *V. Lud.*
Viv. ad
S. Aug. de
Civit. Dei,
l. 19. c. 1.

der, that they thought the great care ought to be to regulate their own actions; how soon did their passions discover themselves about the way to govern them! And they all agreed in this, that there was great need to do it, and that it was impossible to do it without the principles of Vertue; (a) for never was there any Philosopher so bad, as to think any man could be happy without Vertue; even the *Epicureans* themselves acknowledged it for one of their established Maxims, *that no man could live a pleasant life without being good*: and supposing the multiplication of *Sects* of *Philosophers* about these things as far as *Varro* thought it possible to 288. (although there never were so many, nor really could be upon his own grounds) yet not one of all these but made it necessary to be vertuous, in order to being happy; and those who did not think vertue to be desired for it self, yet made it a necessary means for the true pleasure and happiness of our lives. But when they were agreed in this, that it was impossible for a vitious man to enjoy any true contentment of mind; they fell into nice and subtle disputes about the names and order of things to be chosen; and so lost the

the

the great effect of all their common principles. They pretended great cures for the disorders of mens lives, and excellent remedies against the common distempers of humane nature, but still the disease grew under the remedy, and their applications were too weak to allay the fury of their passions. It was neither the order and good of the Universe, nor the necessity of events, nor the things being out of our power, nor the common condition of humanity, no nor that comfort of ill natured men, as *Carneades* call'd it, the many companions we have in misery, that could keep their passions from breaking out when a great occasion was presented them. For he who had read all their discourses carefully, and was a great man himself, I mean *Cicero*, upon the death of his beloved daughter, was so far from being comforted by them, that he was fain to write a consolation for himself, in which the greatest cure (it may be) was the diversion he found in writing it. But supposing these things had gone much farther, and that all wise men could have governed their passions as to the troubles of this life (and certainly the truest wisdom lies in that) yet what had all this been to a preparation

ration for an eternal state, which they knew little of, and minded less? All their discourses about a happy life here, were vain, and contradicted by themselves, when, after all their rants about their *wise man being happy in the bull of Phalaris*, &c. they yet allow'd him to dispatch himself if he saw cause, which a wise man would never do, if he thought himself happy when he did it. So that unless *God* himself had given assurance of a life to come, by the greatest demonstrations of it in the death and resurrection of his Son; all the considerations whatever could never have made mankind happy. But by the Gospel he hath taken away all suspicions and doubts concerning another state, and hath declared his own readiness to be reconciled to us upon our repentance, to pardon what hath been done amiss, and to give that divine assistance whereby our wills may be governed, and our passions subdued, and upon a submission of our selves to his wise Providence, and a sincere obedience to his Laws, he hath promised eternal salvation in the life to come.

3. God hath given us the greatest assurance that these offers came from himself;

self ; which the *Apostle* gives an account of here, saying, that *this salvation began at first to be spoken by our Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness by signs and wonders, &c.* Wherein we have all the satisfaction which the minds of reasonable men could desire as to these things: It might be justly expected, that the messenger of so great news to the World should be no mean and ordinary person ; neither was he, for the honour was as great in the person who brought it, as the importance was in the thing it self : No less than the Eternal Son of God came down from the Bosom of his Father, to rectifie the mistakes of Mankind, and not only to shew them the way to be happy, but by the most powerful arguments to perswade them to be so. Nay, we find all the three persons of the Trinity here engaged in the great work of mans salvation ; *it was first spoken by our Lord, God also bearing them witness, and that with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost.* So that not only the first revelation was from God, but the testimony to confirm that it was so, was from him too ; there being never so clear an attestation of any divine truths as was of the

the Gospel. From whence it follows that the foundation whereon our Faith stands, is nothing short of a *divine testimony*, which God gave to the truth of that revelation of his will; so vain are the cavils of those who say, we have nothing but meer *probabilities* for our Faith, and do interpret that manner of proof which matters of fact are capable of, in a sense derogatory to the firmness of our Christian Faith. Astho' we made the Spirit of God a *Paraclete* or *Advocate* in the worst sense, which might as well plead a bad as a good cause. No, we acknowledge, that *God himself did bear witness* to that doctrine *deliver'd by our Lord* and that in a most signal and effectual manner, for the conviction of the world by those demonstrations of a divine power which accompanied the first Preachers of salvation by the Gospel of Christ. So that here the *Apostle* briefly and clearly resolves our Faith; if you ask, *Why we believe that great salvation which the Gospel offers?* the answer is, *Because it was declared by our Lord*, who neither could nor would deceive us: If it be asked, *How we know that this was delivered by our Lord?* he answers, because this was the constant Doctrine of all his Disciples,

of those who constantly heard him, and conversed with him. But if you ask again, *how can we know, that their testimony was infallible, since they were but men?* he then resolves all into that, *that God bare witness to them by signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost.* And those persons whom these arguments will not convince, none other will. Who are we, that should not think that sufficient which God himself thought so! who are we, that dare question the certainty of that which hath had the *Broad Seal* of Heaven to attest it! Can any thing make it surer than God himself hath done? and can there be any other way more effectual for that end, than those demonstrations of a divine power and presence which the Apostles were acted by? Those that cavil at this way of proof, would have done so at any other, if God had made choice of it: and those who will cavil at any thing, are resolved to be convinced by nothing; and such are not fit to be discoursed with.

4. Here are the most prevailing motives to perswade them to accept of these offers of salvation. There are two passions, which are the great hinges of Government, *viz.* mens Hopes and Fears,
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and therefore all Laws have had their sanctions suitable to these two in Rewards and Punishments : now there was never any reward which gave greater encouragement to hope, never any punishment which made fear more reasonable than those are which the Gospel proposes. Will ever that man be good whom the hopes of Heaven will not make so ? or will ever that man leave his sins whom the fears of Hell will not make to do it ? What other argument can we imagine should ever have that power and influence on mankind, which these may be reasonably supposed to have ? Would you have God alter the methods of his Providence, and give his rewards and punishments in this life ? but if so, what exercise would there be of the patience, forbearance and goodness of God towards wicked men ? must he do it as soon as ever men sin ? then he would never try whether they would repent and grow better : or must he stay till they have come to such a height of sin ? then no persons would have cause to fear him, but such who are arrived at that pitch of wickedness : but how then should he punish them ? must it be by continuing their lives, and making them

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miserable? but let them live, and they will sin yet further: must it be by utterly destroying them? that to persons, who might have time to sin the mean while, (supposing annihilation were all to be fear'd) would never have power enough to deter men from the height of their wickedness. So that nothing but the misery of a life to come, can be of force enough to make men fear God, and regard themselves; and this is that which the Gospel threatens to those that neglect their salvation, which it sometimes calls (a) *everlasting fire*, some-^{(a) Mat. 25. 41.} times (b) *the Worm that never dies*,^{(b) Mark 9. 44.} sometimes (c) *the wrath to come*, some-^{(c) 1 Thef. 1. 10.} times (d) *everlasting destruction*, all e-^{(d) 2 Thef. 1. 9.} nough to fill the minds of men with horror at the apprehension; and what then will the undergoing it do? Thence our Saviour reasonably bids men, (e) *not*^{(e) Mat. 10. 28.} *fear them that can only kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell.* Thus the Gospel suggests the most proper object of fear, to keep men from sin, and as it doth that, so it presents likewise the most desirable object of hope to encourage men to be good; which is no less than a happiness

(a) 2 Cor.
4. 17.

that is easier to hope to enjoy than comprehend; a happiness infinitely above the most ambitious hopes and glories of this world; wherein greatness is added to glory, weight to greatness, and eternity to them all; therefore call'd *(a)* *far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* Wherein the Joys shall be full and constant, the perception clear and undisturbed, the fruition with continual light and continual desire. Where there shall be no fears to disquiet, no enemies to alarm, no dangers to conquer, nothing shall then be, but an uninterrupted peace, an unexpressible Joy, and pleasures for evermore. And what can be ever imagined more satisfactory to minds tired out with the vanities of this world, than such a repose as that? What more agreeable to the minds and desires of good men, than to be eased of this clog of flesh, and to spend eternity with the fountain of all goodness, *as the spirits of just men made perfect?* What more ravishing delight to the souls that are purged, and *(b)* *made glorious by the blood of the Lamb,* than to be singing *Hallelujahs to him that sits upon the Throne and to the Lamb for ever and ever?* How poor and low things are those which men

(b) Rev. 7.
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hope for in this world, compared with that great salvation, which the Gospel makes so free a tender of? What a mean thing is it to be great in this world, to be honourable and rich, *i. e.* to be made the object of the envy of some, the malice of others, and at last it may be, an instance of this world's vanity; and after all this to be for ever miserable? But O the wisdom of a well-chosen happiness, that carries a man with contentment and peace through this life, and at last rewards him with a Crown of everlasting felicity. Thus we see the Gospel proposes the most excellent means to make men happy, if they be not guilty of a gross neglect of it; and if they be, that is their own act, and they must thank none but themselves if they be miserable.

2. But I pray, what reason can be given, since God is so tender of our happiness, that we should neglect it our selves? which is the next thing to be spoken to. There are three sorts of things we think we have reason to neglect: Such as are too *mean*, and unworthy our care, such as are so *uncertain*, that they will not recompence it, such as our own *Interest* is not at all concerned in; but I hope there are none who have an im-

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mortal soul, and the use of their understandings, can ever reckon their salvation under one of these.

I. Is it too *mean* an employment for you to mind the matters of your eternal welfare? Is Religion a beggarly and contemptible thing, that it doth not become the greatness of your minds to stoop to take any notice of it? Hath God lost his honour so much with you, that his service should be the object of mens scorn and contempt? But what is it which these brave spirits think a fit employment for themselves, while they despise God and his Worship? Is it to be curiously dressed, and make a fine shew, to think the time better spent at the Glass than in their Devotions? These indeed are weighty employments, and fit in the first place to be minded, if we were made only to be gazed upon. Is it meerly to see Plays and read Romances, and to be great admirers of that vain and frothy discourse which all persons account wit but those which have it? This is such an end of man's life which no *Philosopher* ever thought of. Or is it to spend time in excesses and debaucheries, and to be slaves to as many lusts as will command them? This were something indeed,

we had any other name given us but that of *Men*. Or lastly, is it to have their minds taken up with the great affairs of the World, to be wise in considering, carefull in managing the publick interest of a Nation? This is an employment, I grant, fit for the greatest minds, but not such which need at all to take them off from minding their eternal salvation. For the greatest wisdom is consistent with that, else Religion would be accounted folly, and I take it for granted, that it is never the truly wise man but the pretender that entertains any mean thoughts of Religion. And such a one uses the publick Interest no better than he doth Religion, only for a shew to the world, that he may carry on his own designs the better. And is this really such a valuable thing for a man to be contented to cheat himself of his eternal happiness, that he may be able to cheat the world, and abuse his trust? I appeal then to the Consciences of all such who have any sense of humanity, and the common interest of Mankind, setting aside the considerations of a life to come, whether to be just and sober, vertuous and good, be not more suitable to the design of humane Nature,

than all the vanities and excesses, all the little arts and designs which men art to please themselves with? And if shall the eternal happiness which follows upon being good, make it less desirable to be so? No surely, but if God had required any thing to make us happy, which had been as contrary to our present Interest as the Precepts of Christianity are agreeable to it; yet the end would have made the severest commands easie, and those things pleasant which tend to make us happy.

2. Are these things so *uncertain*, that they are not fit for a wise man to be solicitous about them? *if they will come with little care, they will say, they are desirable but too much will unfit them for greater happiness?* But do men believe these things to be true or not, when they say thus? if they be true, why need they fear their uncertainty? if they be certain, what pain and care can be too great about them? since a little will never serve to obtain them? Let but the care and diligence be proportionable to the greatness of the end, and the weight of the things, and you never need fear the want of a recompense for all your labour. But suppose you say, *if you were fully convinced of the*

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certainty, you would look more after them.
 What hinders you from being so convinced? Is it not a bad disposition of mind which makes you unwilling to enquire into them? examine things with a mind as free as you would have it, judge seriously according to the reason of things, and you will easily find the interests of a life to come are far more certain, as well as more desirable than those of this present life. And yet the great uncertainty of all the honours and riches of this world, never hinder the covetous or ambitious person from their great earnestness in pursuit of them. And shall not then all the mighty arguments which God himself hath made use of to confirm to us the certainty of a life to come, prevail upon us to look more seriously after it? Shall the unexpressible love of the Father, the unconceivable sufferings of the Son of God, and the miraculous descent and powerful assistance of the Holy Ghost have no more impression on our minds, than to leave us uncertain of a future state? What mighty doubts and suspicions of God, what distrusts of humane Nature, what unspeakable ingratitude, and unaccountable folly lies at the bottom of all this uncertainty? *O fools,*
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and slow of heart to believe, not only what the Prophets have spoken, but what our Lord hath declared, God himself hath given testimony to, and the Holy Ghost hath confirmed!

3. But is not your *Interest* concerned in these things? Is it all one to you whether your souls be immortal or no? whether they live in eternal felicity, or in changeable misery? Is it no more to you than to know what kind of Baubles are in request at the *Indies*, or whether the Customs of *China* or *Japan* are the wise *i. e.* than the most trifling things, and the remotest from our knowledge. But this is so absurd and unreasonable to suppose, that men should not think themselves concerned in their own eternal happiness and misery, that I shall not shew so much distrust of their understanding as to speak any longer to it.

3. But if notwithstanding all these things our neglect still continues, the (a) *there remains nothing but a fearful looking for of judgement, and the fiery indignation of God.* For there is no possibility of escaping if we continue to neglect this great salvation. All hopes of escaping are taken away, which are only in that which men neglect; and those who neglect

(a) Heb.
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lest their only way to salvation; must needs be miserable. How can that man ever hope to be saved by him whose blood he despises and tramples under foot? What grace and favour can he expect from God, who hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace? That hath cast away with reproach and contempt the greatest kindness and offers of Heaven. What can save him that resolves to be damned, and every one does so, who knows he shall be damned, if he lives in his sins, and yet continues to do so? God himself, in whose only pity our hopes are, hath irreversibly decreed that he will have no pity upon those, who despise his goodness, slight his threatnings, abuse his patience, and sin the more because he offers to pardon. It is not any delight that God takes in the miseries of his Creatures, which makes him punish them; but shall not God vindicate his own honour against obstinate and impenitent sinners? He declares beforehand, that he is far from delighting in their ruine, and that is the reason he hath made such large offers, and used so many means to make them happy; but if men resolve to despise his offers, and slight the means of their salvation, shall not God be just without being thought to be

be cruel? And we may assure our selves none shall ever suffer beyond the just desert of their sins, for *punishment*, as the Apostle tells us in the words before the Text is nothing *but a just recompence of reward*. And if there were such a one proportionable to the *violation of the Law delivered by Angels*; how shall we think to escape who neglect a more excellent means of happiness, which was delivered by our Lord himself? If God did not hate sin, and there were not a punishment belonging to it, why did the Son of God die for the expiation of it? and if his death were the only means of expiation, how is it possible that those who neglect that, should escape the punishment not only of their other sins, but of that great contempt of the means of our salvation by him? Let us not then think to trifle with God, as though it were impossible a Being so merciful and kind should ever punish his Creatures with the miseries of another life: For, however we may deceive our selves, (a) *God will not be mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap; for he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.*

(a) Gal. 6.
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I shall only propound some few Considerations, to prevent so great a neglect as that of your salvation is.

1. Consider what it is you neglect, the offer of Eternal Happiness, the greatest kindness that ever was expressed to the World, the foundation of your present peace, the end of your beings, the stay of your minds, the great desire of your Souls, the utmost felicity that humane Nature is capable of. Is it nothing to neglect the favour of a Prince, the kindness of Great Men, the offers of a large and plentiful Estate; but these are nothing to the neglect of the favour of God, the love of his Son, and that salvation which he hath purchased for you. Nay, it is not a bare neglect, but it implies in it a mighty contempt not only of the things offered, but of the kindness of him who offers them. If men had any due regard for God or themselves, if they had any esteem for his love, or their own welfare, they would be much more serious in Religion than they are. When I see a person wholly immersed in affairs of the World, or spending his time in luxury and vanity, can I possibly think that man hath any esteem of God or of his own Soul? When I find one very serious in
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the pursuit of his Designs in the World, thoughtful and busie, subtle in convincing them, careful in managing them, very formal, remiss and negligent in affairs of Religion, neither inquisitive about them, nor serious in minding them, what can we otherwise think, but that such a one doth really think the things of the World better worth looking after, than those which concern his eternal salvation. But consider, before it be too late, and repent of so great folly. Value an immortal Soul as you ought to do, think what Reconciliation with God, and the Pardon of sin is worth, slight not this dear Purchase which was bought at no meaner a rate than the Blood of the Son of God, and then you cannot but misvalue the great salvation which God hath redeemed you.

2. Consider on what terms you neglect it, or what the things are for whose sake you are so great enemies to your own salvation. Have you ever found true contentment in sin or the vanities of the World, that for the sake of them, you are willing to be for ever miserable? What will you think of all your debaucheries, and your neglects of God and your selves, when you come to

to die? what would you then (if it were in your power to redeem your lost time) that you had spent your time less to the satisfaction of your sensual desires, and more in seeking to please God? How uncomfortable will the remembrance be of all your excesses, oaths, injustice and profaneness, when death approaches, and judgement follows it? What peace of mind will there then be to those who have served God with faithfulness, and have endeavoured to *work out their salvation*, though it hath been *with fear and trembling*? But *what would it then profit a man to have gained the whole World, and to lose his own Soul*? Nay, what unspeakable losers must they then be, that lose their Souls for that which hath no value at all, if compared with the World.

3. Consider what follows upon this neglect, not only the loss of great salvation, but the incurring as great damnation for it. The Scripture describes the miseries of the life to come, not merely by negatives, but by the most sensible and painful things. If destruction be dreadful, what is *everlasting destruction*? if the anguish of the soul, and the pains of the body be so troublesome, what will *the destruction be both*

both of Body and Soul in Hell? If a Serpent gnawing in our bowels be a representation of an insupportable misery here, what will that be of *the Worm that never dies?* if a raging and devouring fire, which can last but till it hath consumed a fading substance, be in its appearance so amazing, and in its pain so violent, what then will the enduring be of that wrath of God, which shall burn like fire, and yet be everlasting? Consider then of these things, while God gives you time to consider of them; and think it an inestimable mercy that you have yet time to repent of your sins, to beg mercy at the hands of God, to redeem your time, to depart from iniquity, to be frequent in Prayer, careful of your Actions, and in all things obedient to the will of God, and so God will pardon your former neglects, and grant you this great salvation.

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SERMON VI.

Preached on

GOOD-FRIDAY

before the

Lord Mayor, &c.

Hebrews XII. 3.

For, consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be weary, and faint in your minds.

IT hath never yet been so well with the World, and we have no great reason to hope it ever will be so ; that the best of things, or of men, should meet with entertainment in it, suitable to their own worth and excellency. If it were once to be hoped, that all Mankind would be wise and sober, that their judgments
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would be according to the truth of things, and their actions suitable to their judgments; we might then reasonably expect that nothing would be valued so much as true goodness, nothing so much in contempt and disgrace as impiety and profaneness. But if we find it much otherwise in the Age we live in, we have so much the less cause to wonder at it; because it hath been thus, in those times we might have thought would have been far better than our own. I mean those times and ages, wherein there were not only great things first spoken and delivered to Mankind, but examples as great as the things themselves; but these did so little prevail on the stupid and unthankful world, that they among whom the *Son of God* did first manifest himself, seem'd only solicitous to make good one Prophecie concerning him, viz. *That he should be despised and rejected of men.* And they who suffer'd their malice to live as long he did, were not contented to let it dye with him; but their fury increases as the Gospel does: and wherever it had spread it self, they pursue it with all the rude clamours, and violent persecutions which themselves or their factors could raise against it. This we
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have a large testimony of, in those *Jewish* Christians to whom this Epistle was written; who had no sooner embraced the Christian Religion, but they were set upon by a whole army of persecutors, *Heb. 10. 32. But call to remembrance the former days, in which after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions.* As though the great enemy of souls, and therefore of Christians, had watched the first opportunity to make the strongest impression upon them, while they were yet young and unexperienced; and therefore less able to resist so sharp an encounter. He had found how unsuccessful the offer of the good things of this World had been with their Lord and Master; and therefore was resolved to try what a severer course would do with all his followers. But the same spirit by which he despised *all the Glories of the World*, which the Tempter would have made him believe he was the disposer of, enabled them with a mighty courage, and strange transports of joy, not only to bear their own share of reproaches and afflictions, but a part of theirs who suffer'd with them, *v. 33, 34.* But lest through continual duty, occasion'd by the hatred of their persecutors, and the

multitude of their afflictions ; their courage should abate, and their spirits faint; the Apostle finds it necessary, not only to put them in mind of their former magnanimity ; but to make use of all arguments that might be powerful with them, to keep up the same vigour and constancy of mind in bearing their sufferings, which they had at first. For he well knew, how much it would tend to the dishonour of the Gospel, as well as to their own discomfort ; if after such an early proof of a great and undaunted spirit, it should be said of them, as was once of a great *Roman* Captain, *Ultima Primis cedebant* ; that they should decline in their reputation as they did in their years ; and at last sink under that weight of duty which they had born with so much honour before. Therefore, as a General in the Field, after a sharp and fierce encounter at first, with a mighty resolution by his Souldiers ; when he finds by the number and fresh recruits of the enemy, that his smaller forces are like to be born down before them ; and through mere weariness of fighting are ready to turn their backs, or yield themselves up to the enemies mercy ; he conjures them by the honour they have gain'd, and the courage

courage they had already expressed, by their own interest, and the example of their Leaders, by the hopes of glory, and the fears of punishment, that they would bear the last shock of their enemies force, and rather be the Trophies of their Courage than of their Triumphs : so does our Apostle, when he finds some among them begin to debate, whether they had best to stand it out or no ; he conjures them, 1. By the remembrance of their own former courage, whereby they did bear as sharp tryals as these could be, with the greatest chearfulness and constancy ; and what could they gain by yielding at last, but great dishonour to themselves, that they had suffer'd so long to no purpose, unless it were to discover their own weakness and inconstancy. 2. By the hopes of a reward which would surely follow their faithfulness ; v. 35, 36. *Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise : and the time will not be long ere ye come to enjoy it, v. 37. but if ye draw back, you lose all your former labours, for he who alone is able to recompence you, hath said, that if any man draw back, my*

soul shall have no pleasure in him, v. 38, and then from the example of himself, and all the genuine followers of Christ, but we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul, v. 39. But lest these examples should not be enough to persuade them; he conjures them by the name of all those who were as eminent for the greatness of their minds as the strength of their Faith; who have despised the frowns as well as the smiles of the world; and were not discouraged by the severest tryals from placing their confidence in God, and their hopes in a life to come; and all this done *by persons who had not received the Promise: Heb. 11. 39.* And could there be a greater disparagement to the clearness of that light we enjoy above them, if we only grew fainter by it? And therefore in the beginning of this Chapter he encourages them by that army of Martyrs which had gone before them, *by that Cloud of witnesses* which did both direct and refresh them, that they would lay aside every thing which was apt to oppress or dishearten them, but especially their sinful fears, which they were so easily betray'd by, and so run with patience the race that was

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set before them, v. 1. But, saith he, if none of these will prevail with you, there is an example yet behind, that ought above all others to heighten your courage, and that is, of the *Captain of your salvation, the author and finisher of your faith*, under whom you serve, and from whom you expect your reward; and as *Cæsar* once said to his Souldiers, when he saw them ready to retreat out of the field, *Videte quem, & quo loco Imperatorem deserturi estis*. Remember what kind of General you forsake, and in what place you leave him: one whom you have vow'd your lives and your service to, one who hath thought nothing too dear, which was to be done for your good, one that will be ready to reward the least service you can do for him, one that is ready to assist you to the utmost in what you undertake, one that hath already undergone far more for your sakes, than ever you can do for his; therefore, *Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be weary, and faint in your minds*.

In which words we have represented to us, the unparallel'd example of courage and patience under sufferings, in our Lord and Saviour; and the great

influence that it ought to have on all those who are call'd by his Name, that they would not dishonour so excellent a pattern of enduring sufferings, by weakness or dejection of mind. Christianity is a Religion which above all others does arm men against all the contingencies and miseries of the life of man: yea, it makes them serviceable to the most advantageous purposes that the greatest blessings can be designed for. It raises the minds of men higher than barely to consider the common condition of humane nature, the unavoidableness of such things which are out of our own power, and the unreasonableness of tormenting our selves about the things which are so, and that most mens conditions in the world as to their contentment, depends more upon their minds, than their outward circumstances; though these are things very fit for us as men to consider and make use of; yet they do not teach to that height, which the consideration of a life to come, and the tendency of all our sufferings here to the inancement of our future glory may raise us to. Especially considering not only the weight of the arguments in themselves, but the force they receive from the example

ample of him, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, and despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. By which mighty instance we find, that the sufferings of this life are so far from being inconsistent with the joys of another, that he who is (a) *the Captain of salvation*, was made perfect through sufferings, ^{(a) Heb. 2. 10.} and therefore none of his followers have cause to be dejected under them. But that we may the better understand the force of this argument, we shall consider,

1. What those things were which he endured.

2. From whom he suffer'd them; *it was the contradiction of sinners against himself.*

3. In what way and manner he underwent them.

4. For what ends he did it. And when we have considered these, we shall see the influence this example of Christ's sufferings ought to have upon our constancy and patience: which will be the most useful improvement of it to us.

1. *What those things were* which Christ endured; which are here comprehended under those words, *the contradiction of sinners.*

sinners. It is agreed by the best Expositors, both *Greek* and *Latin*, that under this phrase of *the contradiction of sinners*, the whole History of our Saviour's sufferings is comprehended. All the injuries, reproaches, false accusations, all the cruelties, indignities, and violence, which were offer'd him, from the time of his publick appearance to his expiring upon the Cross, being undergone by him, by the malice of unreasonable men, may be call'd *the contradiction of sinners*. For the sense of this word extends as well to actions as words; and the sum of all that which our Saviour suffer'd from them, may be reduced under these heads.

1. The ill entertainment of his Doctrine.
2. The disparagement of his Miracles.
3. The violence offer'd to his Person.

1. The ill entertainment of his Doctrine; which must needs seem very strange to those who do not consider what a difficult access the clearest reason hath to the minds of such who are governed by interest and prejudice. Though all the the Prophecies concerning the *Messias* were fulfilled in him; though the expectations of the people were great at that time concerning the appearance of him

him that was to redeem his people; tho' all the characters of time, place, and person, did fully agree to what was foretold by the Prophets; though his Doctrine were as becoming the Son of God to reveal, as the sons of men to receive; though the unspotted innocency of his life was so great, as made him weary of his own that betray'd him: yet because he came not with the pomp and splendor which they expected, they despise his Person, revile his Doctrine, persecute his Followers, and contrive his ruin. What could have been imagined more probable, than that the *Jewish* Nation, which had waited long in expectation of the *Messias* coming, should have welcom'd his approach with the greatest joy, and receiv'd the Message he brought with a kindness only short of that which he shewed in coming among them? Was it nothing to be eased of that heavy burden of the Ceremonial Law, which neither they nor their Fathers were able to bear? and that God was willing to exchange the chargeable and troublesome service of the Temple, for the more reasonable and spiritual Worship of himself? Was it nothing to have the Promises of a Land which now groaned under the weight of its

its oppressions, turned into those of an eternal state of bliss and immortality? and to change the Lamps of the Temple, for the glorious appearance of the Son of Righteousness? Was it nothing to have an offer of Peace and Reconciliation with God made them, after they had suffer'd so much under the fury of his displeasure? Was a meer temporal deliverance by some mighty Conquerour from the subjection they were in to the *Roman* Power, so much more valuable a thing, than an eternal redemption from the powers of Hell and the Grave? Are the pomps and vanities of this present life, such great things in God's account, that it was not possible for his Son to appear without them? Nay, how unsuitable had it been for one who came to preach humility, patience, self-denial, and contempt of the world, to have made ostentation of the State and Grandeur of it? So that either he must have changed his Doctrine, or rendered himself lyable to the suspicion of seeking to get this world by the preaching of another. And if his Doctrine had been of another kind, he might have been esteemed a great person among the *Jews*, but not the Son of God, or the promised

sed *Messias*, in whom all Nations of the Earth should be blessed. Which surely they would never have thought themselves to have been, in one, who must have subdued the neighbour Nations to advance the honour of his own. But since the Son of God thought fit to appear in another manner than they expected him, they thought themselves too great to be saved by so mean a Saviour. If he had made all the Kingdoms of the Earth to have bowed under him, and the Nations about them to have been all tributaries to them; if *Jerusalem* had been made the Seat of an Empire as great as the World it self, they would then have gloried in his Name, and entertained whatever he had said, whether true or false, with a wonderful Veneration. But Truth in an humble dress meets with few admirers; they could not imagine so much Power and Majesty could ever shroud it self under so plain a disguise. Thus Christ (a) came to his own, and his (a) r John own received him not. Yea, those that should have known him the best of all others; those who frequently conversed with him, and heard him *speak as never man spake*, and saw him do what never man did, were yet so blinded by the meanness

ness of his Parentage and Education, that they baffle their own Reason, and persist in their Infidelity, because they knew the place and manner of his breeding; the names of his Mother and his Brethren and Sisters; (a) *Are they not all with us? whence then hath this man all these things?* As though, *Is not this the Carpenters Son*, had been sufficient answer to all he could say or do.

2. The disparagement of his Miracles. Since the bare proposal of his Doctrine, though never so reasonable, could not prevail with them to believe him to be the Son of God, he offers them a further proof of it by the mighty works which were wrought by him. And though the more ingenuous among them were ready to acknowledge, (b) *that no man could do the things which he did, unless God were with him*: yet they who were resolved to hear and see, and not understand; when they found it not for their credit, to deny matters of fact so universally known attested, they seek all the means to blast the reputation of them that may be. Sometimes raising popular insinuations against him, that he was a man of no austere life, a friend of Publicans and Sinners, one that could choose

no other day to do his works on, but that very day wherein God himself did rest from his; and therefore no great regard was to be had to what such a one did. When these arts would not take, but the people found the benefit of his Miracles, in healing the sick, curing the blind and the lame, feeding the hungry; then they undervalue all these in comparison with the wonders that were wrought by *Moses* in the Wilderness. If he would have made the Earth to open her mouth, and swallow up the City and the power of *Rome*; if he would have fed a mighty Army with bread from Heaven, instead of feeding some few thousands with very small Provisions; if instead of raising one *Lazarus* from the Grave, he would have raised up their *Sampson's*, and their *David's*, their men of spirit and conduct, whose very presence would have put a new life into the hearts of the people; if instead of casting out *Devils*, he would have cast out the *Romans*, whom they hated the worse of the two: if he would have set himself to the cure of a distempered State, instead of healing the maladies of some few inconsiderable persons: if instead of being at the expense of a Miracle to pay tribute, he

he would have hinder'd them from paying any at all; then a *Second Moses* would have been too mean a title for him, he could have been no less than the promised *Messias*, the *Son of God*. But while he imploy'd his power another way, the demonstration of it made them hate him the more; since they thought with themselves what strange things they would have done with it for the benefit of their Country; and therefore express the greatest malice against him, because he would not imploy it as they would have him. From thence, they condemn his Miracles as only some effects of a Magical skill; and say, he dispossessed the lesser *Devils* by the power of him that was the *Prince* among them. So unworthy a requital did they make for all the mighty works which had been done among them; *Which*, as our Saviour saith, *(a) if they had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.*

(a) Mat.
11. 21.

3. But altho' all this argued a strange spirit of *contradiction* in them to all the designs for their own good; yet the malice from whence that rose, would not stop here; for as they had long contrived his ruin, so they watched only an opportunity to effect it. Which his frequent

quent presence at *Jerusalem* seemed to put into their hands, but his reputation with the people made them fearful of embracing it. Therefore they imploy their Agents to deal privately with one of his Disciples who might be fittest for their design; and to work upon his covetous humour by the promise of a reward, to bring him to betray his Master with the greatest privacy into their hands. This *Judas* undertakes, knowing the place and season of his Masters retirements, not far from the City, where they might with the greatest secrecy and safety seize upon his person. Which contrivance of theirs our Saviour was not at all ignorant of; but prepares himself and his Disciples for this great encounter. He institutes his solemn Supper, to be perpetually observed in remembrance of his death and sufferings, after which he discourses admirably with his Disciples, to arm them against their future sufferings; and prays that most divine Prayer, *St. John* 17. which he had no sooner finished, but he goes with his Disciples to the usual place of his retirement in a *Garden* at the foot of the *Mount of Olives*. And now begins the blackest Scene of sufferings that ever was acted upon humane Nature.

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Which

Which was so great, that the Son of God himself expresseth a more than usual apprehension of it; which he discovered by the *Agony* he was in, in which he sweat (a) *drops of blood*; by the earnestness of his Prayer, falling upon his knees, and praying thrice, saying, (b) *O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.* Surely, this Cup must needs have a great deal of bitterness in it, which the Son of God was so earnest to be freed from. If there had been nothing in it but what is commonly incident to humane Nature, as to the apprehensions of death or pain, it seems strange, that he who had the greatest innocency, the most perfect charity, the freest resignation of himself, the fullest assurance of the reward to come, should express a greater sense of the horror of his sufferings, than thousands did, who suffer'd for his sake. But now was *the hour come* wherein the Son of God was to be made

(a) Luk.
22. 44.

(b) Mat.
26. 39.

(c) Isa. 53.
4. 5.

(d) Mat.
26. 38.

(e) Luke
22. 53.

a Sacrifice for the sins of men wherein he was to *bear our griefs, and carry our sorrows*, when he was (c) *to be wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities*; now (d) *his soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death*; for now (e) *the hour of his enemies was come, and the*

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the power of darknes. And accordingly they improve it; they came out against him as a Malefactor, with swords and staves, and having seized his Person, being betray'd into their hands by one of his Disciples, they carry him to the High Priests house, where his professed enemies presently condemn him of (a) Blasphemy, (a) Mat. 26. 66, 67. and not content with this, they express the greatest contempt of him, for they spit in his face, they buffet him, and smite him with the Palms of their hands, they mock him, and bid him prophesie who it was that smote him; so insolent was their malice grown, and so spightful was their indignation against him. And so fearful were they, lest he should escape their hands, that the very next morning early, they send him bound to the Roman Governour, to have the sentence pronounced against him, to whom they accuse him of Seditition and Treason; but *Pilate* upon examination of him declares, (b) *he found no fault in him*; (b) Luke 23. 4. which made them heap more unreasonable calumnies upon him, being resolved by what means soever to take away his life. Nay, the price of the Blood of the Son of God was fallen so low with them, that they preferred the life of a known seditious person, and a Murtherer before him.

(a) Mat.
27. 23.

And when *Pilate* being unsatisfied, asked still, (a) *what evil hath he done?* they continue their importunity without any other answer but *Crucifie him*, and making up what wanted in Justice and Reason in the loudness of their clamours. And at last seeing the fury and madness of the people, with the protestation of his own innocency as to his blood, he delivers him up to the people; and now he is stripped, and scourged, and mock'd, with a *Crown of Thorns*, a *Scarlet Robe*, and a *Reed in his hand*: all the indignities they could think of, they put upon him. But though it pleased them, to have him exposed to all the ignominies imaginable, yet nothing would satisfy them but *his blood*; and therefore he is led forth to be crucified, and though so lately scourged and weakened by his sorrows, yet he is made to carry his own Cross (at least through the City) for no other death could satisfy them, but the most ignominious, and painful. And when he was brought to the place of Crucifixion, they nail his hands and feet to the Cross, and while he was hanging there, they deride and mock him still, they divide his garments before his face, give him Gall and Vinegar to drink, and the last

act of violence committed upon him, was the piercing of his side, so that out of his *Pericardium* issued (a) *both water and blood*. Thus did the Son of God suffer at the hands of unreasonable men; thus was the blood of that immaculate Lamb spilt by the hands of violence; and he who left the bosom of his Father, to bring us to glory, was here treated as if he had been unworthy to live upon the Earth.

(a) Joh 19. 34.

2. But that which yet heightens these sufferings of Christ, is to consider, *from whom* he suffer'd these things, it was *from sinners*; which is as much as to say, from *men*, if the word were taken in the largest sense of it; for all have sinned; but being taken by us in opposition to other men, so it implies a greater height of wickedness in these than in other persons. But this is not here to be consider'd absolutely, as denoting what kind of persons he suffer'd from, but with a particular respect to the nature of their proceedings with him, and the obligations that lay upon them to the contrary. So that the first shews the injustice and unreasonableness of them; the second, their great ingratitude, considering the kindness and good will which he expressed towards them.

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1. The injustice and unreasonableness of their proceedings against him. It is true indeed, (what *Socrates* said to his wife, when she complained that he suffered unjustly, *What, saith he, and would you have me suffer justly?*) it is much greater comfort to the person who does suffer, when he does it unjustly, but it is a far greater reflection on those who were the causes of it. And that our *Blessed Saviour* did suffer with the greatest injustice from these men, is apparent from the falseness and weakness of all the accusations which were brought against him. To accuse the *Son of God* for Blasphemy, in saying, he was so, is as unjust as to condemn a *King* for treason, because he saith he is a *King*: they ought to have examined the grounds on which he call'd himself so; and if he had not given pregnant evidences of it, then to have passed sentence upon him as an Impostor and Blasphemer. If the thing were true, that he was what he said, *the Son of God*, what horrible guilt was it in them, to imbrue their hands in his blood: and they found he always attested it, and now was willing to lay down his life to confirm the truth of what he said. This surely ought at least to have made them
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more inquisitive into what he had affirmed; but they allow him not the liberty of a fair tryal, they hasten and precipitate the sentence, that they might do so the execution. If he were condemned as a false Prophet; (for that seems to be the occasion of the *Sanhedrim* meeting to do it, to whom the cognisance of that did particularly belong) why do they not mention what it was he had foretold, which had not come to pass; or what reason do they give why he had usurped such an Office to himself? If no liberty were allowed under pain of death for any to say, that they were sent from God, how was it possible for the *Messias* ever to appear, and not be condemned? for the expectation of him was, that he should be a great person immediately sent from God, for the delivery of his people. And should he be sent from God, and not say that he was so? for how then could men know that he was? So that their way of proceeding with him, discovers it self to be manifestly unjust, and contrary to their own avowed expectations. Neither were they more successful in the accusation of him before *Pilate*; why did not the witnesses appear to make good the charge of sedition

and treason against him ? where were the proofs of any thing tending that way ? Nay , that which abundantly testified the innocency of our *Saviour*, as to all the matters he was accused of, was that the *Roman Governour*, after a full examination of the cause, declares him innocent, and that not only once but several times ; and was fully satisfied in the Vindication he made of himself, so that nothing but the fear of what the *Jews* threatned, *viz.* accusing him to *Cæsar* (a thing he had cause enough otherwise to be afraid of) which made him at last yield to their importunity. But there was one circumstance more which did highly discover the innocency of Christ, and the injustice of his sufferings, which was *Judas's* confession and end ; the man who had betray'd his Lord, and had receiv'd the wages of his iniquity ; but was so unquiet with it, that in the time when his other Disciples durst not own him, he with a great *impetus* returns to them with his Money, throws it among them with that sad farewell to them all, (a) *I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.* What could have been said more for his Vindication at this time than this was, by such a person as *Judas*,
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(a) Mat.
27. 4.

one who had known our Saviour long, and had been the fittest instrument, if any guilt could have been fasten'd upon him, to have managed the accusation against him; but the anxiety of his mind was too great for what he had done already, to live to do them any longer service; for either his grief suffocated him, or his guilt made him hang himself; for the words will signifie either. Neither can it be said by any modern *Jews*, that all the testimony we have of these things is from his own Disciples; but that certainly they had some greater matter to accuse him of; which we now have lost. For how is it possible to conceive, that a matter so important as that was, should be lost by those of their own Nation, who were so highly concerned to vindicate themselves in all places, as soon as the *Gospel* was spread abroad in the World? For the guilt of th's blood was every where by the *Christians* charged upon them; and their prodigious sufferings afterwards were imputed wholly by them to the shedding of that *blood* of *Christ*, which by a most solemn imprecation they had said, *should be upon them and their Children*. Besides, how comes *Celsus*, who personates a *Jew*, opposing Christia-

(a) *Orig. c.*
Cels. l. 3.
p. 123.

(b) *August.*
de Civit.
Dei, l. 19.
c. 23.

(c) *Cur ergo dam-*
natus est?
respondit
Dea: cor-
pus qui-
dem debi-
litantibus
tormentis
semper op-
positum est,
anima au-
tem piorum
caelesti sedi
insidet.

Christianity, to mention no other accusations against him but those recorded in the Gospel; and (a) *Origen* challenges him or any other person to charge him with any action which might deserve punishment. And which is very observable, *Porphyrie*, one of the most inveterate enemies of Christianity, and that took as much pains to write against it as any, and had more learning to do it with, yet in his Book of the *Philosophy of Oracles*, as (b) *St. Augustin* tells us, quotes an Oracle wherein were these words concerning Christ, *And what became of him after his death?* it saith, *that his Soul was immortal*, (c) *Viri pietate præstantissimi est illa anima, and that it was the soul of a most excellent person for piety*; and being then asked, *why he was condemned?* the answer only is, *that the Body (of the best) is exposed to weakning torments, but the Soul rests in heavenly habitations*. So that on no account can this contradiction appear to be otherwise than an act of great injustice and cruelty, and therefore must needs be the contradiction of sinners.

2. This contradiction of theirs to Christ was an act of high Ingratitude. It was a sharp but very just rebuke which the

Jews

Jews received from our Saviour, when they were once ready to stone him; (a) *Many good works have I shewed you* (a) John 10. 32. *from my Father, for which of those works do you stone me?* The very same might have been applyed to his Judges and accusers; when they were about to crucifie him. For what was his whole Life after he appeared publicly, but a constant design of doing good? His presence had far more vertue for the curing all bodily distempers, than the *Pool of Bethesda* among the *Jews*, or the *Temples of Æsculapius* among the *Gentiles*. What wonders were made of very small things done by other persons, as the cure of a blind Man by *Vespasian*! when such multitudes of far more certain and considerable cures, can hardly keep up the reputation of any thing extraordinary in him. But though his kindnes was great to the bodies of men, where they were fit objects of pity and compassion; yet it was far greater to their souls, that being more agreeable to the design of his coming into the World; for the other tended to raise such an esteem of him as might make him the more successful in the cure of their Souls. And to shew, that this was his great business, where-
ever

ever he comes, he discourages about these things, takes every opportunity that might be improved for that end, refuses no company he might do good upon, and converses not with them with the pride and arrogance of either the *Pharisees* or *Philosophers*, but with the greatest meekness, humility and patience. How admirable are his more solemn discourses, especially that upon the Mount, and that wherein he takes leave of his Disciples! How dry and insipid are the most sublime discourses of the *Philosophers* compared with these! how clearly doth he state our Duties, and what mighty encouragements does he give to practise them! how forcibly does he persuade men to self-denial and contempt of the world! how excellent and holy are all his Precepts! how serviceable to the best interest of men in this life and that to come! how suitable and desirable to the souls of good men are the rewards he promises! what exact rule of Righteousness hath he prescribed to men, *in doing as they would be done by*! with what vehemency doth he rebuke all hypocrisie and *Pharisaism*! with what tenderness and kindness does he treat those that have any real inclinations to true goodness! with what earnest-

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ness does he invite, and with what love doth he embrace all repenting sinners! with what care doth he instruct, with what mildness doth he reprove, with what patience doth he bear with his own disciples! Lastly, with what authority did he both speak and live, such as commanded a reverence, where it did not begot a love! And yet after a life thus spent, all the requital he met with, was to be reproached, despised, and at last crucified. O the dreadful effects of malice and hypocrisy! for these were the two great enemies which he always proclaimed open war with; and these at first contrived, and at last effected his cruel death. What baseness, ingratitude, cruelty, and injustice, (and what not?) will those two sins betray men to, when they have once taken possession of the hearts of men! for we can find nothing else at the bottom of all that wretched conspiracy against our Saviour; but that his doctrine and design was too pure and holy for them; and therefore they study to take him away who was the author of them.

3. We consider, *in what way and manner*, our Saviour underwent all these sufferings; and this as much as any thing is here propounded to our *consideration*.

For

For it is not only who, or what, but in what manner he endured the contradiction of sinners, that we ought to consider, to prevent fainting and dejection of mind. So another Apostle tells us,

(a) 1 Pet. 2. 21, 22, 23. (a) *That Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who when he was reviled, reviled not again: when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judged righteously.* He uses none of those ranting expressions which none of the patientest persons in the world were accustomed to; of bidding them *laugh in Phalaris his Bull*; and when they were racked with pains, to cry out, *Nil agis dolor*: he tells them not, that it is their duty to have no sense of torments, and to be jocund and pleasant when their flesh is torn from them, or nailed to a Cross; if this be any kind of fortitude, it is rather that of a *Gladiator* than of a wise man or a Christian. The worst of men either through a natural temper of body, or having hardned themselves by custom, have born the greatest torments with the least expression of grief under them. And *Panætius*, one of the wisest of the *Stoicks*, is so far from making insensible-

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ness of pain the property of a wise man, that he makes it not the property of a man. The inferiour Creatures are call'd *Brutes* from their dulness and insensibility, and not meerly from want of reason, any further than that one follows from the other : (a) *Bruta existimantur animalium quibus cor durum riget*, saith Pliny, those animals are call'd *Brutes* which have the hardest hearts : and the nearer any of them approach to the nature of man, the more apprehensive they are of danger, and the more sensible of pain ; thence (b) *Scaliger* saith of the *Elephant*, that it is *maxima bellua, sed non maximè bruta*, though it be the greatest beast, it is the least a *Brute*. Stupidity then under sufferings can be no part of the excellency of a man ; which in its greatest height is in the *Beings* the most beneath him. But when danger is understood, and pain felt, and Nature groans under it, then with patience and submission to undergo it, and to conquer all the strugglings of Nature against it, that is the duty and excellency of a Christian. If to express the least sense of grief and pain, be the highest excellency of suffering, the *Macedonian Boy* that suffer'd his flesh to be burnt by a Coal, till it

(a) Plin.
Nat. Hist.
l. II. 37.

(b) Scalig.
hist. anim.
l. 2. sc. 8.
133.

(a) Tull.
Tusculan.
l. 2.

it grew offensive to all about him, without altering the posture of his arm, lest he should disturb *Alexanders* sacrifice, out-did the greatest *Philosophers* of them all. *Possidonius* his pitiful rant over a fit of the Gout, so highly commended by *Pompey* and (a) *Tully*; O pain, it is to no purpose; though thou beest troublesome, I will never confess thou art evil; falls extremely short of the resolution of the *Macedonian Boy*, or any of the *Spartan Youths*, who would not in the midst of torments so much as confess them troublesome. And what a mighty revenge was that, that he would not confess it to be evil, when his complaint that it was troublesome, was a plain argument that he thought it so. It is not then the example of *Zeno* or *Cleanthes*, or the rules of *Stoicism*, which *Dionysius Heracleotes*, in a fit of the Stone complained of the folly of, that are to be the measures of patience, and courage in bearing sufferings; but the example and Precepts of our Lord and Saviour, who expressed a great sense of his sufferings but withal the greatest submission under them. When

(a) *Aub.*
Miræus in
vita à Lip-
sii. p. 60.

(a) *Lipsius* lay a dying, and one of the by-standers knowing how conversant he had been in the *Stoicks* writings, began

to suggest some of their Precepts to him, *Vana sunt ista*, said he, I find all those but vain things ; and beholding the Picture of our Saviour near his bed, he pointed to that, and cryed, *hec vera est patientia*: there is the true pattern of Patience. For, notwithstanding that *Agony* he was in immediately before his being betray'd, when he sees the Officers coming towards him, he asks them *whom they seek for* : and tells them, *I am he* ; which words so astonished them, (a) *that they went back, and fell upon the ground* : thereby (a) Joh. 18 6. letting them understand how easie a matter it was for him to have escaped their hands ; and that it was his own free consent, that he went to suffer, for he knew certainly before hand, the utmost that he was to undergo, and therefore it was no unreasonable *impetus*, but a settled resolution of his mind to endure all the contradictions of sinners. When he was spit upon, mocked, reproached and scourged, none of all these could draw one impatient expression from him. The malice and rage of his enemies did not at all provoke him ; unless it were to pity and pray for them. And that he did, with great earnestness in the midst of all his pains : and though he would not plead

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for himself to them; yet he pleads; for them to God; *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* How much more divine was this, than the admired *Theramenes* among the *Greeks*, who being condemned to die by the thirty *Tyrants*, when he was drinking off his cup of *Poyson*, said, *he drank that to Critias*, one of his most bitter enemies, and hoped he would pledge it shortly. *Socrates* seemed not to express seriousness enough at least, when he bid one of his friends, when he was dying, offer up a *Cock* to *Æsculapius* for his deliverance. *Aristides* and *Phocion* among the *Greeks* came the nearest to our Saviour's temper, when one pray'd, *That his Country might have no cause to remember him when he was gone*, and the other charged his Son, *to forget the injuries they had done him*; but yet by how much the greater the Person and Office was of our *Blessed Saviour*, than of either of them, by how much the cruelty and ignominy, as well as pain was greater which they exposed him to, by how much greater concernment there is to have such an offence pardon'd by one that can punish it with eternal misery, than not revenged by those, who though they may have will, have not
always

always power to execute ; so much greater was the kindness of our *Saviour* to his enemies, in his Prayer upon the Cross, than of either of the other, in their concernment for that ungrateful City, that had so ill requited their services to it. Thus when the Son of God was oppressed, and afflicted, (a) *He opened not his* (a) Isa. 53. *mouth*, but only in Prayer for them, who were his bitter enemies ; and though nothing had been more easie than for him to have cleared himself from all their accusations, who had so often baffled them before ; yet he would not now give them that suspicion of his innocency, as to make any *Apology* for himself ; but committed himself to God that judges righteously, and was brought as a Lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers was dumb, so he opened not his mouth. And the reason thereof was, he knew what further design for the good of mankind was carrying on by the bitterness of his passion, and that all the cruel usage he underwent, was that he might be a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the World. Which leads to the last thing propounded to our consideration.

4. Which is, *the causes* why God was pleased to suffer his Son *to endure such contradiction of sinners against himself*. I know it is an easie answer to say, that God had determin'd it should be so, and that we ought to enquire no further: but sure such an answer can satisfie none who consider, how much our salvation depends upon the knowledge of it, and how clear and expresse the Scripture is in assigning the causes of the Sufferings of Christ. Which though as far as the instruments were concerned in it, we have given an account of already; yet considering the particular management of this grand affair by the care of divine Providence, a higher account must be given of it, why so divine and excellent a Person should be exposed to all the contempt and reproach imaginable, and after being made a Sacrifice to the tongues and rods of the people, then to dye a painfull and ignominious death? So that allowing but that common care of divine Providence, which all sober *Heathens* acknowledged, so transcendent Sufferings as these were, of so holy and innocent a person, ought to be accounted for, in a more than ordinary manner; when they thought themselves concerned to vindicate the Justice

Justice

justice of God's Providence in the common calamities of those who are reputed to be better than the generality of Mankind. But the reasons assigned in that common case will not hold here, since this was a person immediately sent from God upon a particular message to the World, and therefore might plead an exemption by virtue of his Ambassage from the common arrests and troubles of humane nature. But it was so far otherwise, as tho' God had designed him on purpose to let us see how much misery humane nature can undergo. Some think themselves to go as far as their reason will permit them; when they tell us, that he suffer'd all these things *to confirm the truth of what he had said, and particularly the Promise of Remission of sins, and that he might be an example to others, who should go to Heaven by suffering afterwards, and that he might, being touched with the feeling of our infirmities here, have the greater pity upon us now he is in Heaven.* All these I grant to have been true and weighty reasons of the Sufferings of Christ, in subordination to greater ends; but if there had been, nothing beyond all this, I can neither understand why he should suffer so deeply as he did, nor why the Scripture should

insist upon a far greater reason more than upon any of these? I grant, the death of Christ did confirm the truth of his Doctrine, as far as it is unreasonable to believe that any one who knew his Doctrine to be false, would make himself miserable to make others believe it; but if this had been all intended, why would not an easier and less ignominious death have served? since he who would be willing to dye to confirm a falshood, would not be thought to confirm a truth by his death, because it was painful and shameful. Why, if all his Sufferings were designed as a testimony to others, of the truth of what he spake, were the greatest of his Sufferings, such as none could know the anguish of them but himself, I mean his *Agony* in the Garden, and that which made him cry out upon the Cross; *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Why were not his Miracles enough to confirm the truth of his Doctrine? since the *Law* of *Moses* was received without his death, by the evidence his Miracles gave that he was sent from God; since the Doctrine of remission of sins had been already deliver'd by the Prophets, and received by the People of the *Jews*; since those who would not believe for his Miracles

racles sake, neither would they believe though they should have seen him rise from the Grave, and therefore not surely because they saw him put into it. But of all things, the manner of our *Saviour's* sufferings seems least designed to bring the World to the belief of his Doctrine, which was the main obstacle to the entertainment of it among the men of greatest reputation for wisdom and knowledge. For it was (a) *Christ crucified*, (a) 1 Cor. which was to the Jews a stumbling block, 1. 23. and to the Greeks foolishness. Had the Apostles only preached that the Son of God had appeared from Heaven, and discovered the only way to bring men thither, that he assumed our Nature for a time to render himself capable of conversing with us, and therein had wrought many strange and stupendious miracles; but after he had sufficiently acquainted the World with the nature of his Doctrine, he was again assumed up into Heaven; in all probability, the Doctrine might have been so easily received by the World, as might have saved the lives of many thousand persons, who dyed as *Martyrs* for it. And if it had been necessary that some must have dyed to confirm it, why must the Son of God himself do

(a) *Quod
cetera eti-
am fœdera
c. so ani-
mali ali-
quo sanc-
ti, & san-
guine ejus
confirmari
solent.
Crell. c.
Grot. ad
Cap. 1.
p. 29.*

(f) *V. Heins.
hor. ad Sil.
p. 9, 10.*

it? when he had so many Disciples who willingly sacrificed their lives for him, and whose death would on that account have been as great a confirmation of the truth of it as his own. But if it be al-
 ledged further, (a) *that God now entering into a Covenant with man for the pardon of sin, the shedding of the blood of Christ was necessary as a federal rite to confirm it.* I answer, if only as a federal rite, why not cheaper blood would serve to confirm it but that of the Son God? We never read that any Covenant was confirmed by the death of one of the contracting parties; and we cannot think that God was so prodigal of the blood of his Son, to have it shed only in allusion to some ancient customs. But if there were such a necessity of alluding to them, why might not the blood of any other person have done it? when yet all that custom was no more, but that a sacrifice should be offer'd, and upon the parts of the sacrifice divided, they did solemnly swear and ratifie their Covenant. (b) And if this be yielded them, it then follows from this custom, that Christ must be consider'd as a *sacrifice* in his death; and so the ratification of the Covenant must be consequent to that oblation which he made

of himself upon the Cross. Besides, how incongruous must this needs be, that the death of Christ the most innocent person in the World, without any respect to the guilt of sin, should suffer so much on purpose to assure us, that God will pardon those who are guilty of it? May we not much rather infer the contrary, considering the holiness and justice of God's nature; if he dealt so severely *with the green tree, how much more will he with the dry?* If one so innocent suffer'd so much, what then may the guilty expect? If a Prince should suffer the best subject he hath to be severely punished, could ever any imagine that it was with a design to assure them that he would pardon the most rebellious? No; but would it not rather make men afraid of being too innocent, for fear of suffering too much for it? And those who seem very careful to preserve the honour of God's Justice, in not punishing one for another's faults, ought likewise to maintain it in the punishing of one who had no fault at all to answer for. And to think to escape this by saying, *That to such a person such things are calamities, but no punishments,* is to revive the ancient exploded Stoicism, which thought to reform the dif-

eases

eases of Mankind by meer changing the names of things, though never so contrary to the common sense of humane nature: which judges of the nature of punishments by the evils men undergo, and the ends they are designed for. And by the very same reason that God might exercise his dominion on so innocent a person as our Saviour was, without any respect to sin *as the moving cause to it*, he might lay eternal torments on a most innocent Creature (for degrees and continuance do not alter the reason of things) and then escape with the same evasion, that this was no act of injustice in God, because it was a meer exercise of Dominion. And when once a sinner comes to be perswaded by this that God will pardon him, it must be by the hopes that God will shew kindness to the guilty, because he shews so little to the innocent; and if this be agreeable to the Justice and Holiness of God's nature, it is hard to say what is repugnant to it. If to this it be said, *That Christ's consent made it no unjust exercise of Dominion in God towards him*: it is easily answered, that the same consent will make it less injustice in God to lay the punishment of our sins upon Christ, upon his undertaking to satisfy

tisfic for us ; for then the consent supposes a meritorious cause of punishment ; but in this case the consent implyeth none at all. And we are now enquiring into the reasons of such sufferings, and consequently of such a consent ; which cannot be imagined but upon very weighty motives, such as might make it just in him to consent, as well as in God to inflict.

Neither can it be thought that all the design of the sufferings of Christ, was to give us an example and an encouragement to suffer our selves ; though it does so in a very great measure, as appears by the Text it self. For the hopes of an eternal reward for these short and light afflictions, ought to be encouragement enough, to go through the miseries of of this life in expectation of a better to come. And the *Cloud of Witnesses* both under the Law and the Gospel, of those who have suffer'd for righteousness sake, ought to make no one think it strange, if he must endure that, which so many have done before him, and been crowned for it. And lastly, to question whether Christ could have pity enough upon us in our sufferings, unless he had suffer'd so deeply himself ; will lead men to distrust the

the pity and compassion of Almighty God, because he was never capable of suffering, as we do. But the *Scripture* is very plain and full (to all those who rack not their minds to pervert it) in assigning a higher reason than all these of the *sufferings of Christ*, viz. That

- (a) 1 Pet. 3. 18. *(a) Christ suffered for sins, the just for the unjust*; that (b) *his soul was made an offering for sin*, and that the Lord therefore
 (b) Isa. 53. 10. as on a sacrifice of atonement, (c) *laid on him the iniquities of us all*: That
 (c) V. 6. *through the eternal Spirit*, (d) *He offered himself without spot to God*, and did appear to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; that he was made a propitiation
 (d) Heb 9. 14. *for our sins*; that, (e) *He laid down his life as a price of Redemption for Mankind*;
 (e) 1 Joh. 2. 2, 4, 10. that, (f) *through his blood we obtain Redemption, even the forgiveness of sins*, which in a more particular manner is
 (f) 1 Tim. 6. 2. attributed (g) *to the blood of Christ*, as
 (g) 1 Cor. 6. 20. the procuring cause of it. That he
 Ephef. 1. 7. dyed (h) *to reconcile God and us together*; and that (i) *the Ministry of Reconciliation*, is founded (k) *on God's making him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*:
 (h) Col. 1. 14. and that we may not think that all this
 (i) Rom. 3. 24, 25. Reconciliation respects us and not God;
 (k) Rom. 5. 10. he

he is said (a) *To offer up himself to God* ; (a) 2 Cor. 5. 19, 21. and for this cause *to be a Mediator of the New Testament*, and (b) *to be a faithful High-Priest in things pertaining to God*, (b) Heb. 9. 14, 15. *to make reconciliation for the sins of the people* (c) and every High-Priest, taken from (c) Heb. 2. among men is ordained for men in things 17. pertaining to God ; not appointed by God in things meerly tending to the good of men ; which is rather the Office of a Prophet than a Priest. So that from all these places it may easily appear, that the blood of Christ is to be looked on as a sacrifice of Atonement for the sins of the World. Not as though Christ did suffer the very same which we should have suffer'd, for that was eternal death as the consequent of guilt in the person of the Offender, and then the discharge must have been immediately consequent upon the payment, and no room had been left for the freeness of remission, or for the conditions required on our parts ; But that God was pleased to accept of the death of his Son, as a full, perfect, sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the World ; as our Church expresseth it ; and in consideration of the sufferings of his Son, is pleased to offer pardon of sin upon sincere

mere repentance, and eternal life upon a holy obedience to his will. Thus much for the things we are to consider concerning the contradiction of sinners which Christ endured against himself.

Nothing now remains, but the influence that ought to have upon us, lest we be weary and faint in our minds. For which end I shall suggest two things.

1. The vast disproportion between Christ's sufferings and ours.

2. The great encouragement we have from his sufferings, to bear our own the better.

1. The vast Disproportion between Christ's sufferings and our own. Our lot is fallen into suffering times; and we are apt enough to complain of it. I will not say it is wholly true of us, what the *Moralist* saith generally of the complaints of men, *Non quia dura sed quia molles patimur*; that it is not the hardness of our conditions so much as the softness of our spirits which makes us complain of them. For I must needs say, this *City* hath smarted by such a series and succession of judgments which few Cities in the World could parallel in so short a time. The Plague hath emptied

emptied its houses, and the fire consumed them; the War exhausted our spirits, and it were well if Peace recovered them. But still these are but the common calamities of humane nature, things that we ought to make account of in the World, and to grow the better by them. And it were happy for this City, if our thankfulness and obedience were but answerable to the mercies we yet enjoy: let us not make our condition worse by our fears; nor our fears greater than they need to be: for no enemy can be so bad as they. Thanks be to God our condition is much better at present than it hath been; let us not make it worse by fearing it may be so. Complaints will never end till the World does; and we may imagine that will not last much longer; when the City thinks it hath trade enough, and the Country riches enough. But I will not go about to perswade you that your condition is better than it is, for I know it is to no purpose to do so; all men will believe as they feel. But suppose our condition were much worse than it is; yet what were all our sufferings compared with those of our Saviour for us; the sins that make us smart, wounded

ded him much deeper ; they pierced his side, which only touch our skin, we have no cause to complain of the bitterness of that Cup which he hath drunk off the dregs of already. We lament over the ruins of a City, and are revived with any hopes of seeing it rise out of the dust ; but Christ saw the ruins that sin caused in all mankind, he undertook the repairing them, and putting men into a better condition than before : And we may easily think what a difficult task he had of it ; when he came to restore them who were delighted in their ruins, and thought themselves too good to be mended. It is the comfort of our miseries, (if they be only in this life) that we know they cannot last long ; but that is the great aggravation of our Saviour's sufferings, that the contradiction of sinners continues against him still. Witness, the *Atheism*, I cannot so properly call it, as the *Antichristianism* of this present Age ; wherein so many profane persons act over again the part of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* ; they slight his Doctrine, despise his Person, disparage his Miracles, contemn his Precepts, and undervalue his Sufferings. Men live as if it were in defiance to his
holy

holy Laws ; as though they feared not what God can do, so much as to need a *Mediator* between him and them. If ever men tread under foot the *Son of God*, it is when they think themselves to be above the need of him ; if ever they count the *blood of the Covenant* an *unholy thing*, it is not only when they do not value it as they ought, but when they exercise their profane wits upon it. *Blessed Saviour !* was it not enough for thee to bear the contradiction of sinners upon Earth ; but thou must still suffer so much at the hands of those whom thou diedst for, that thou mightest bring them to Heaven ? was it not enough for thee to be betrayed on Earth, but thou must be defied in Heaven ? was it not enough for thee to stoop so low for our sakes, but that thou shouldest be trampled on because thou didst it ? was the ignominious death upon the Cross too small a thing for thee to suffer in thy Person, unless thy Religion be contemned, and exposed to as much shame and mockery as thy self was ? Unhappy we, that live to hear of such things ! but much more unhappy if any of our sins have been the occasion of them : If our unsuitable lives to the Gospel have o-

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pend the mouths of any against so excellent a Religion. If any malice and revenge, any humour and peevishness, any pride or hypocrisie, any sensuality and voluptuousness, any injustice, or too much love of gain, have made others despise that Religion which so many pretend to, and so few practise. If we have been in any measure guilty of this, as we love our Religion, and the honour of our Saviour, let us endeavour by the holiness and meekness of our spirits, the temperance and justice of our actions, the patience and contentedness of our minds, to recover the honour of that Religion which only can make us happy, and our Posterity after us.

2. What Encouragement we have from the sufferings of Christ, to bear our own the better; because we see by his example that God deals no more hardly with us, than he did with his own Son, if he lays heavy things upon us. Why should we think to escape, when his own Son underwent so much? if we meet with reproaches, and ill usage, with hard measure, and a mean condition, with injuries and violence, with mockings and affronts, nay, with a shameful and a painful death, what cause have we

we to complain; for did not the Son of God undergo all these things before us? If any of your Habitations have been consumed, that you have been put to your shifts where to lodge your selves, or your Families; consider, that (a) *though (a) Mat. 8. the Foxes have holes, and the Birds of the Air have nests, yet the Son of Man had not whereon to lay his head.* If your condition be mean and low, think of him, (b) *who being in the form of God, took (b) Phil. 2. upon him the form of a servant; and (c) (c) 2 Cor. 8. 9. though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that through his poverty ye might be made rich.* If you are unjustly defamed and reproached, consider what contumelies and disgraces the Son of God underwent for you. If you are in pain and trouble, think of his Agony and bloody sweat, the nailing of his hands and feet to the Cross, to be a sacrifice for the expiation of your sins. Never think much of undergoing any thing, whereby (d) *you may be conformable to the (d) Rom. Image of the Son of God, knowing this, (e) (e) V. 17. that if ye suffer with him, ye shall also be glorified together.* And you have never yet set a true estimate and value upon things, if you (f) *reckon the sufferings of this present life worthy to be compared with the*

glory which shall be revealed. Which Glory ought always to bear up our minds under our greatest afflictions here; and the thoughts of that, will easily bring us to the thoughts of his sufferings, who

(b) Heb. 9. 12. *(a) by his own blood purchased an eternal redemption for us. Therefore, consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be weary, and faint in your minds.*

SER-

SERMON VII.

Preached before the

K I N G,

JANUARY 30. 166 $\frac{8}{9}$.

JUDE, V. 11.

*And perished in the gainsaying of
Corah.*

AMong all the dismal consequences of that fatal day wherein the *Honour* of our Nation suffered together with our *Martyr'd Sovereign*, there is none which in this Place we ought to be more concerned for, than the *Dishonour* which was done to *Religion* by it. For if those things which were then acted among us, had been done among the most rude and barbarous Nations, though that had been enough to

have made them for ever thought so; yet they might have been imputed to their ignorance in matters of *Civility* and *Religion*: but when they are committed not only by men who were called *Christians*, but under a pretence of a mighty zeal for their *Religion* too, Men will either think that *Religion* bad, which did give encouragement to such actions, or those persons extremely wicked, who could make use of a pretence of it for things so contrary to its nature and design. And on which of these two the blame will fall, may be soon discovered, when we consider that the *Christian Religion*, above all others, hath taken care to preserve the Rights of *Sovereignty*, by (a) giving unto *Cæsar* the things that are *Cæsars*, and to make resistance unlawful by declaring (b) that those who are guilty of it shall receive to themselves damnation. But as though bare resistance had been too mean and low a thing for them (notwithstanding what *Christ* and his *Apostles* had said) to shew themselves to be *Christians* of a higher rank than others; they imbrue their hands in the Blood of their *Sovereign* for a demonstration of their *Piety*, by the same figure by which they had destroyed Mens *Rights* to defend their *Liberties*,

(a) Mat.
22. 21.

(b) Rom.
13. 2.

Liberties, and fought against the *King* for preservation of his *Person*. But the actions of such Men could not have been so bad as they were, unless their pretences had been so great; for there can be no higher aggravation of a wicked action, than for Men to seem to be Religious in the doing of it. If the *Devil* himself were to preach sedition to the world, he would never appear otherwise than as an *Angel of Light*: his pretence would be Unity, when he designed the greatest Divisions; and the preservation of Authority, when he laid the seeds of Rebellion. But we might as well imagine that the *God of this World* (as the *Devil* is sometime called) should advance nothing but Peace and Holiness in it, as that *Christianity* should give the least countenance to what is contrary to either of them. Yet the wickedness of Men hath been so great upon earth, as to call down Heaven it self to justify their impieties, and when they have found themselves unable to bear the burden of them, they would fain make *Religion* do it.

Such as these we have a description of in this short, but smart Epistle, viz Men who pretend inspirations and impulses for the greatest villainies; who believed it a

part of their Saintship to *despise Dominions, and speak evil of Dignities*; who thought the *Grace of God* signified very little, unless it serv'd to justify their most wicked actions. These in all probability were the followers of *Simon Magus*

the *Leviathan* of the Primitive Church, (a) who destroyed all the natural differences of good and evil, (b) and made it lawful for Men in case of Persecution, to forswear their Religion. (c) The great part of his Doctrine being that his Disciples need not be afraid of the terrors of the Law, for they were free to do what they pleased themselves, because Salvation was not to be expected by good works, but only by the Grace of God: No wonder then, that such as these did turn the Grace of God into lasciviousness: And when it proved dangerous not to do it, would deny their Religion, to save themselves. For they had so high opinions of themselves, that they were the only Saints, that as (d) Epiphanius tells us, they thought

(a) Φασὶ γὰρ, ὅτι ἕσα νομίζεται ὡς ἀνθρώποις καχὰ εἶναι, ἢ καχὰ ὑπάρχει. ἀλλὰ φύσει καλὰ (ὅθεν γὰρ οὐ δύσκει κακόν) τοῖς ἡ ἀνθρώποις νομίζεται εἶναι φαῦλα. Eriphan. hares. 27. p. 105. ed. Petav.

(b) Φαρεθήσεσθαι ἡ διαβολικὴν δύναμιν ἐισηγέμεν ἡ τῶν ἡρώων, ἀπαρτισθείαν αὐτὰς ἐκ διδασκων. Eriphan. hares. 24. f. 5. p. 73.

(c) Τὸς δ' ἐς αὐτὸν πτεύουσας ἐκ ἐλευσε (Σίμων) μὴ προσέχειν ἐκείνοις (προφήταις) μὴ δ' φείσθην τῶν νόμων τὰς ἀπειλὰς, ἀλλὰ πείσθην ὡς ἐλευθέρους ἀπερ' αὐν ἐδεήσωσιν. ἢ γὰρ διακρίσεων ἀγαθῶν ἀλλὰ διακρίσεως πύξωσιν τῆς σωτηρίας. Theodoret. hares. fab. l. 1. p. 193.

(d) Ἡμεῖς, φησιν ἐσμεν οἱ ἄνθρωποι, οἱ δ' ἄλλοι πάντες οἷς ἡ κυ-

it the casting Pearls before Swine, to expose themselves to danger before the Heathen Governours; by which they not only discovered what a mighty value they set upon themselves, but what mean and contemptible thoughts they had of that Authority which God had established in the world.

But this they would by no means allow, for they thought all the Governments of the world to be nothing else (a) but the contrivance of some evil spirits to a bridge men of that liberty which God and nature had given them: And this is that speaking evil of Dignities which they are charged with, not only by our Apostle here, but by St. Peter before him.

Although the phrase used by (b) St. Peter, δέξας βλασφημίας may be taken (by the use of the word βλασφημία in the first of (c) Maccabees) not for the bare contempt of Authority, expressed by reviling language, but for an open resistance of it; which the other is so natural an introduction to, that those who think and speak contemptibly of Government, do but want an occasion to manifest

νῆς ἢ διὰ τὸ ἐπεὶ μὴ
βάλητε τὰς μαργαρίτας
ἐμπροσθεν τοῦ χοίρου.
Epiph. har. 24 sect. 5.

(a) Ad utilitatem ergo gentium, terrenum regnum positum est à Deo: sed non à Diabolo, qui nunquam omnino quietus est, immò qui nec ipsas quidem gentes vult in tranquillo agere. Iren. advers. hæc. l. 5. c. 24.

(b) 2 Pet. 2. 10.

(c) 1 Mac. 2. 6.

manifest that their actions would be as bad as their thoughts and expressions are. And from hence ἀνιδόξως here in the words of the Text is made use of to express one of the most remarkable seditions we ever read of: viz. that of *Corah* and his *Company* against *Moses* and *Aaron*; whose punishment for it did not deter these persons who went under the name of *Christian*, from joyning in seditious practices to the great dishonour of Christianity, and their own ruine. For therefore the *Apostle* denounces a *Woe* against them in the beginning of the verse, and speaks of their ruine as certain as if they had been consumed by fire, or swallowed up by the earth, as *Corah* and his accomplices were; *And they perished in the gainsaying of Corah.* In the verb ἀπώλῃς, the *Aorist*, saith *Grotius*, is taken for the future, or present, and so implying that these courtes did tend to their misery and ruine, and would unavoidably bring it upon them. If the evidence in history had been clear of the *Carpocratians* joyning with the *Jews* in the famous rebellion of *Barchochebas*, wherein such multitudes of *Christians* as well as *Heathens* were destroyed in *Africa*, *Egypt*, and other places, and the time of it had agreed with

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with the time of writing this Epistle, I should then have thought that this had been the Rebellion here spoken of; for all the Actors in it were destroyed by the Roman Power, and some of the chief of them made publick examples of Justice for the deterring of others from the like practices. But however this be, we find these persons here charged with a sin of the same nature; with the gainsaying of Corah, and a judgment of the same nature, as the consequent of the sin; for they perished in the gainsaying, &c. And therefore we shall consider the words,

1. As relating to the fact of Corah and his company.

2. As implying as great displeasure of God under the Gospel against the same kind of sin, as he discovered in the immediate destruction of those persons who were then guilty of it.

1. As relating to the fact of Corah and his company; and so the words lead us to the handling

1. The nature of the Faction which was raised by them.

2. The Judgment that was inflicted upon them for it.

1. For understanding the nature of the Faction, we must enquire into the design that

that was laid, the persons that were engaged in it, the pretences that were made use of for it.

1. The *design* that was laid for that, and all other circumstances of the story, we must have resort to the account that is given of it, *Numb. 16.* where we shall find that the bottom of the design was the sharing of the Government among themselves, which it was impossible for them to hope for, as long as *Moses* continued as a *King in Jeshurun*, for so he is called, *Deut. 33. 5.* Him therefore they intend to lay aside, but this they knew to be a very difficult task, considering what wonders *God* had wrought by him in their deliverance out of *Egypt*, what wisdom he had hitherto shewed in the conduct of them, what care for their preservation, what integrity in the management of his power, what reverence the people did bear towards him, and what solemn vows and promises they had made of obedience to him. But ambitious and factious Men are never discouraged by such an appearance of difficulties; for they know they must address themselves to the people, and in the first place persuade them that they manage their interest against the usurpation of their Go-

vernours,

vernours. For by that means they gain upon the peoples affections, who are ready to cry them up presently as the true *Patriots* and Defenders of their *Liberties* against the encroachment of *Princes*: and when they have thus insinuated themselves into the good opinion of the people, groundless suspicions, and unreasonable fears and jealousies will pass for arguments and demonstrations. Then they who can invent the most popular lies against the Government are accounted the Men of integrity, and they who most diligently spread the most infamous reports, are the Men of honesty, because they are farthest from being *Flatterers* of the *Court*. The people take a strange pride, as well as pleasure, in hearing and telling all the faults of their *Governours*; for in doing so they flatter themselves in thinking they deserve to rule much better than those which do it. And the willingness they have to think so of themselves, makes them misconstrue all the actions of their *Superiours* to the worse sense, and then they find out plots in every thing, upon the people. Whatever is done for the necessary maintenance of *Government*, is suspected to be a design meerly to exhaust the people to make them more unable to resist.

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If good Laws be made, these are said by factious men to be only intended for snares for the good people, but others may break them and go unpunished. If Government be strict and severe, then it is cruel and tyrannical; if mild and indulgent, then it is remiss and negligent. If *Laws* be executed, then the peoples Liberties be oppressed; if not, then it were better not to make *Laws*, than not to see them executed. If there be Wars, the people are undone by Taxes; if there be Peace, they are undone by Plenty. If extraordinary Judgments befall them, then they lament the sins of their Governours, and of the Times, and scarce think of their own. If miscarriages happen (as it is impossible always to prevent them) they charge the form of Government with them, which all sorts are subject to. Nay, it is seldom that Governours escape with their own faults, the peoples are often laid upon them too. So here, *Numb.* 16. 14. *Moses* is charged with not carrying them into *Canaan*, when it was their own sins which kept them thence. Yea, so partial have the people generally been against their *Rulers*, when swayed by the power of Faction, that this hath made Government
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very difficult and unpleasing ; for what ever the actions of *Princes* are, they are liable to the censures of the people. Their bad actions being more publick, and their good therefore suspected of design ; and the wiser Governours are, the more jealous the people are of them. For always the weakest part of mankind are the most suspicious ; the less they understand things, the more designs they imagine are laid for them, and the best counsels are the soonest rejected by them. So that the wisest *Government* can never be secure from the jealousies of the people, and they that will raise a Faction against it will never want a party to side with them. For when could we ever have imagined a Government more likely to be free from this, than that which *Moses* had over the people of *Israel* ? He being an extraordinary person for all the abilities of *Government* ; one bred up in the *Egyptian Court*, and in no mean degree of honour, being called the Son of *Pharaohs* Daughter ; one of great experience in the management of affairs, of great zeal for the good of his Country, as appeared by the tenderness of his peoples interest in their deliverance out of *Egypt* ; one of great temper and meekness

ness above all men of the earth; one who took all imaginable care for the good establishment of *Laws* among them; but above all these, one particularly chosen by God for this end, and therefore furnished with all the requisites of a good man, and an excellent *Prince*: yet for all these things a dangerous sedition is here raised against him, and that upon the common grounds of such things, viz. usurpation upon the peoples rights, arbitrary Government, and ill management of affairs; Usurpation upon the peoples rights, v. 4. the *Faction* makes a *Remonstrance* asserting the Priviledges of the people against *Moses* and *Aaron*; *Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the Congregation are holy every one of them, and the Lord is among them: Wherefore then lift you up your selves above the Congregation of the Lord.* As though they had said, we appear only in behalf of the *Fundamental Liberties* of the people both Civil and Spiritual; we only seek to retrench the exorbitances of power, and some late innovations which have been among us; if you are content to lay aside your power which is so dangerous and offensive to *Gods holy people*, we shall then sit down in quietness; for alas it is

not for our selves that we seek these things (what are we?) but the *cause of Gods people* is dearer to us than our lives, and we shall willingly sacrifice them in so good a *Cause*. And when *Moses* afterwards sends for the Sons of *Eliab* to come to him they peremptorily refuse all *Messages of Peace*, and with their ^(a) *men of* ^(a) V. 12, *the sword* mentioned, v. 2. They make ^{13.} votes of *non-Addresses*, and break off all *Treaties* with him, and declare these for their reasons, that he did *dominando dominari*, as some render it, exercise an arbitrary and tyrannical power over the people, that he was guilty of breach of the trust committed to him, for he promised ^(b) *to bring them into a Land flowing* ^(b) V. 14. *with Milk and Honey, or give them inheritance of fields and vineyards*, but he had not done it, and instead of that only, deceives the people still with fair promises, and so *puts out their eyes* that they cannot see into the depth of his designs. So that now by the ill management of his *Trust*, the power was again devolved into the hands of the people, and they ought to take account of his actions. By which we see the design was under very fair and popular pretences to divest *Moses* of his *Government*,

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ment, and then they doubted not but such zealous *Patriots* as they had shewed themselves, should come to have the greater share in it; but this which they most aimed at, must appear least in view, and only *Necessity* and *Providence* must seem to cast that upon them, which was the first true motive they had to rebel against *Moses* and *Aaron*.

2. The *Persons* who were engaged in it. At first they were only some discontented *Levites* who murmured against *Moses* and *Aaron*, because they were not preferred to the *Priesthood*, and of these *Corah* was the chief. *R. Solomon* observes, That the reason of *Corah's* discontent, was, That *Elizaphan* the Son of *Uzziel*, of the younger house to *Izhar* from whom *Corah* descended, was preferred before him by *Moses* to be *Prince* over the Sons of (a) *Kohath*, *Corah* being active and busie in his discontents, had the opportunity of drawing in some of the Sons of *Reuben*, for they pitched their tents near each other, (b) both on the South side of the *Tabernacle of the Congregation*; and these were discontented on the account of their *Tribe* having lost the privilege of *Primogeniture*. Thus what ever the pretences are, how fair and popular soever

(a) Num.
3. 30.

(b) Num.
2. 10. 3. 29.

at such them- greatest most w, and seem as the against aged in discon- against ere not of these observes, nt, was, of the om Co ore him Sons of and busie rtunity of Ren- ear each e of the d these ount of ledge of the pre- e soever in

in the opposition men make to Authority, ambition and private discontents are the true beginners of them : but these must be covered over with the deepest *dissimulation*, with most vehement *Protestations* to the contrary, nothing must be talked of but a mighty zeal for *Religion*, and the publick *interest*. So (a) *Joseph* (a) *Joseph. Antig. Jud. l. 4. c. 2.* tells us concerning *Corah*, that while he carried on his own ambitious designs, with all the arts of sedition and a popular eloquence, insinuating into the peoples minds strange suggestions against *Moses* his Government, as being a meer politick design of his to enslave the people of *God*, and advance his own family and interest, ἐβέλει τὸ τὸν νόμον ἀντιτάσσας, he would seem to regard nothing but the publick good. If fair pretences, and glorious Titles will serve to cheat the people into their own miseries, and the sad effects of Rebellion ; they shall never want those who will *enslave* them for the sake of *Liberty*, *undo* them for the publick good, and *destroy* them with designs of *Reformation*. For nothing is more popular than *Rebellion* in the beginning ; nothing less in the issue of it. and the only true reason that it is ever so, is from the want of wisdom and

ment in the generality of mankind who seldom see to the end of things and hardly distinguish between the nature and nature of them, till their own dear bought experience hath taught them the difference. Sedition is of the nature of *Sin*; for it is conceived with pleasure and brought forth with pain, and ends in death and misery. Nothing enters upon the stage with a braver shew and appearance, but however prosperous for a time it may continue, it commonly meets with a fatal end. But it is with this sin as with this world, as it is with others as to the next; Men when they are betrayed into them, are carried away and transported with the pleasing temptations, not considering the unspeakable misery that follows after them. So that what the Devil's advantage is in order to the ruin of mens souls, is the advantage of seditionous persons over the less understanding people; they both tempt with an appearance of good, and equally deceive them which hearken to them. But as we still find, that notwithstanding all the grave admonitions, the sober counsels, the rational discourses, the perswasive arguments which are used to deter men from

the practice of sin, they will still be such *Fools* to yield to the *Devils* temptations against their own *welfare* : So, neither the blessings of a continued *Peace*, nor the miseries of an intestine *War*, neither the security of a settled *Government*, nor the constant danger of *Innovations* will hinder men of fiery and restless spirits from raising combustions in a Nation, though themselves perish in the *Flames* of them. This we find here was the case of *Corah* and his company ; they had forgotten the groans of their captivity in *Egypt*, and the Miracles of their deliverance out of it, and all the faithful services of *Moses*, and *Aaron* ; they considered not the difficulties of *Government*, nor the impossibilities of satisfying the ambitious desires of all pretenders ; they regarded not that *God* from whom their power was derived, nor the account they must give to him for their resistance of it : nothing but a full *Revenge* upon the Government can satisfy them, by leaving no means unattempted for its overthrow, though themselves be consumed by the fall of it. It were happy for *Government* if these turbulent spirits could be singled out from the rest in their first attempts ;

but that is the usual subtilty of such men, when they find themselves aimed at, they run into the common herd, and perswade the people that they are equally concerned with themselves in the present danger, that though the pretence be only against faction and sedition, the design is the slavery and oppression of the *People*. This they manage at first by grave nods, and secret whispers, by deep sighs, and extatick motions, by far fetched discourses, and tragical stories, till they find the people capable of receiving their impressions, and then seem most unwilling to mention that which it was at first their design to discover. By such arts as these *Corah* had prepared, as (a) *Josephus* tells us, almost the whole Camp of *Israel* for a popular tumult, so that they were like to have stoned *Moses* before he was aware of it; and it seems the Faction had gained a mighty interest among the people, when although God so severely and remarkably punished the heads of it, yet the very next day all the Congregation of the Children of *Israel* murmured against *Moses* and *Aaron*, saying, (b) *Ye have killed the people of the Lord*. What a mark of God's people was sedition grown among them! When these

(a) *Josephus*
antig. l. 4.
c. 2.

(b) *Numb.*
16. 41.

these

ch men, these men were accounted *Saints* in spight
 at, they of Heaven, and *Martyrs*, though God
 perswade himself destroyed them. They were
 concer- men who were only *sanctified* by *Rebellion*:
 ent dan- and shewed no other fruits of their pie-
 be only- ry but disobedience to Authority. But
 e design the danger had not been so great, how
 the Peo- loud soever the complaints had been, if
 y grave only the ruder multitude had been gain-
 p sighs, ed to the Favour of *Corah* and his party:
 shed dis- for these wanted heads to manage them,
 ill they and some *Countenance* of *Authority* to ap-
 ng their pear under; and for this purpose they
 unwill- had drawn to their Faction 250 *Princes*
 was at of the *Assembly*, (a) famous in the *Congrega-* (a) V. 2.
 By such tion, men of Renown, i. e. Members of the
 (a) Jo- great Council of the Nation. Whom *Moses*
 e Camp was wont to call and advise with about
 so that the publick Affairs of it; such who sate
 Moses be in *Comitiis Senatorum*, as *Paul. Fagius* tells
 t seems us, therefore said to be קִדְּאֵי מִרְצֵר such
 interest as were called to the great *Assembly*
 gh God which sate in (b) *Parliament* at the door (b) Numb.
 shed the of the *Tabernacle* of the *Congregation*, 10. 2.
 day all which was the place where they met
 n of Jo- together. These were the *Heads* of the
 Aaron, *Tribes*, and the *Captains* of thousands,
 ople of and the men of the greatest *Fame* and
 s people Authority among the *People*, who *Moses*
 When assembled together for *advice* and *counsel*,
 these

as often as he saw just occasion for it. And as far as I can find were distinct from the great *Sanhedrin*, which seemed to be rather a constant *Court of Judicature* which sat to receive *Appeals* from *Inferiour Courts*, and to determine such difficult causes which were reserved peculiarly for it, as about *Apostasie* of a whole *Tribe*, the case of false *Prophets*, and the like. But these 250 men did far exceed the whole number of the *Sanhedrin*; and the *Heads* of the *Tribes*, and the *Elders* of *Israel* were summoned together upon any very weighty occasion, by *Moses* both before and after the institution of the *Sanhedrin*. And now since the *Faction* had gained so great strength by the accession of so great a number of the most leading men among the *People*, we may expect they should soon declare their intentions, and publish the grounds of their entering into such a combination against *Moses*.

3. Which is the next thing to be spoken to, *viz.* the colours and pretences under which these persons sought to justify the proceedings of the *Faction*. Which were these two.

1. *The asserting the Rights and Liberties of the people in opposition to the Government of Moses.*

2. *The freeing themselves from the encroachments upon their spiritual Priviledges, which were made by the Usurpations of Aaron and the Priesthood.*

1. *The asserting the Rights and Liberties of the people in opposition to the Government of Moses.* (a) *Is it a small thing,* (a) Numb. 13. *say they, that thou hast brought us up out of a Land that floweth with Milk and Honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thy self altogether a Prince over us?* And before, their charge was, (b) *that* (b) V. 3. *Moses and Aaron took too much upon them, in lifting up themselves above the Congregation of the Lord.* Which (c) *Josephus* (c) Joseph. L. 4. 1, 2. *more at large explains, telling us that the great accusation of Moses was, that out of his ambition and affectation of Power, he had taken upon himself the Government of the people without their consent, that he made use of his pretence of Familiarity with God only for a Politick end, that by this means he debarred the people of that Liberty which God had given them, and no man ought to take from them, that they were all*

(a) Συμ- a (a) *Free-born people*, and equally the
 φέρειν ὃ *Children of Abraham*, and therefore there
 πῶς πλῆθει *was no reason* they should depend upon
 τὴς πλῆ- *the will of a single Person*, who by his
 τὴς ἑστὶ *Politick Arts* had brought them to the
 λαμβάνειν *greatest necessities*, that he might rule
 διομένους *them the better*; Wherefore *Corah*, as
 κολλάσειν, *though he had been already President* of
 καὶ μὴ πα- *a High-Court of Justice* upon *Moses* their
 εἰλθεῖν εἰς *King*, determines, *That it was necessary*
 δύναμιν *for the Common wealth*, that such enemies
 ἐκείνου *to the Publick Interest* should be discovered
 φανεροῦς *and punished*; lest if they be let alone in
 ἔχειν πο- *their Usurpations of Power*, they declare
 λημῖς. Jo- *themselves open enemies* when it will be too
Sephus Ant. late to oppose them. There were then
 l. 4. c. 2. two great Principles among them by
 p. 104. which they thought to defend them-
 selves.

1. That *Liberty* and a *right to Power* is so inherent in the *People*, that it cannot be taken from them.

2. That in case of *Usurpation* upon that *Liberty* of the people, they may resume the exercise of *Power*, by punishing those who are guilty of it.

1. That *Liberty*, and a *right to Power*, is inseparable from the people; *libertas patrociniū suscipiunt*, saith *Calvin*, upon *Corah* and his company; and I believe they

they will be found to be the first assertors of this kind of *Liberty* that ever were in the world. And happy had it been for us in this Nation, if *Corah* had never found any Disciples in it. For what a blessed *Liberty* was this which *Corah* aimed at, viz. to change one excellent Prince, as *Moses* was, for 250 Tyrants, besides *Corah* and the Sons of *Reuben*? What just and equal liberty was it which *Moses* did deprive them of? It was only the *Liberty* of destroying themselves, which all the power he had could hardly keep them from. Could there be any greater *Liberty* than delivering them out of the house of bondage? and was not *Moses* the great Instrument in effecting it? Could there be greater *Liberty* than for their whole Nation to be preserved from all the designs of their enemies to enjoy their own *Laws*, and matters of *Justice* to be duly administered amongst them? and had they not all these under the Government of *Moses*? What means then this Out-cry for *Liberty*? Is it that they would have had no *Government* at all among them, but that every one might have done what he pleased himself? This indeed were a desirable *Liberty*, if a man could have it alone:

alone : but when every one thinks that he is but one, though he be free ; and every one else is as free as he, but though their *freedom* be equal to his, his *Power* is not equal to theirs ; and therefore to bring things to a more just proportion, every one must part with some power for a great deal of security. If any man can imagine himself in such a *state of confusion*, which some improperly call a *state of nature* ; let him consider, whether the contentment he could take in his own liberty and power to defend himself, would ballance the fears he would have of the injury which others in the same state might be able to do him. Not that I think meer *fear* made men at first enter into Societies, for there is a natural inclination in mankind to it, and one of the greatest pleasures of humane life lies in the enjoyment of it. But what other considerations incline men to, fear makes reasonable, though men part with some supposed liberty for the enjoyment of it. So that the utmost liberty is destroyed by the very nature of *Government*, and nothing can be more unreasonable than for men to quarrel with *Government* for that, which they cannot enjoy and the preservation of themselves together.

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Which alone makes the desire of *Power* reasonable, and if the preservation of our selves in our rights and properties may be had without it, all that the want of *Liberty* signifies, is, that men have all the conveniences of *Power* without the trouble and the cares of it. And if this be not a more desirable *Liberty* than the other, let any rational man judge. The pretence of *Liberty* then in this sense against *Government*, is, that men are *Fools* in taking the best care to preserve themselves, that *Laws* are but instruments of *Slavery*, and every single man is better able to defend himself, than the united strength of a people in *Society* is to defend him. And this kind of *Liberty* we may justly think will be desired by none but mad-men, and beasts of prey. It follows then, that what *Liberty* is inconsistent with all *Government*, must never be pleaded against one sort of it. But is there then so great a degree of *Liberty* in one mode of *Government* more than another, that it should be thought reasonable to disturb *Government*, meerly to alter the form of it? Would it have been so much better for the people of *Israel* to have been governed by the 250 men here mentioned, than by *Moses*?
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Would not they have required the same subjection and obedience to themselves, though their commands had been much more unreasonable than his? What security can there be that every one of these shall not be worse in all respects than him whom they were so willing to lay aside; and if one be thought troublesome, what *Liberty* and ease is there when their name is *Legion*? So that the folly of these popular pretences is as great as the sin in being persuaded by them.

And it may be they have not thought amiss who have attributed a great part of that disturbance of the Peace of *Kingdoms*, under a pretence of popular *Government*, to an unjust admiration of those *Greek* and *Roman* Writers, who have unreasonably set up *Liberty* in opposition to *Monarchy*. But some of the wisest of them have given us a truer account of these things, and have told us, that it was impossible the *Roman* State could have been preserved longer, unless it had submitted to an (a) *Imperial Power*; for the popular heats and factions were so great, that the annual election of *Magistrates*, was but another name for a *tumult*; and as *Dio* goes on (b) the name of popular *Government* is far more plausible, but the benefits of

(a) *Dio*
Rom. Hist.
l. 54.

(b) *L. 44.*
inir.

of Monarchy are far greater; it being much easier to find one good than many; and though one be accounted difficult, the other is almost impossible. And as he elsewhere well observes, *the flourishing of a Commonwealth depends upon its poverty*; that being alone able to unite the minds of the *Governours*, who in a plentiful state, not set about with enemies, will be grasping at their own private interests, and fall naturally from thence into divisions and animosities; but *the flourishing of the Monarchy lies in the riches of it*, the Prince and the People having the same interest, and being rich or poor together. So that we see the notion of *Liberty*, and the exercise of power in *Government*, is so far from being an inseperable property of the people, that the proper notion of it is inconsistent with *Government*, and that which lies in the *enjoyments of our Rights and Properties*, is so far from being inconsistent with *Monarchy*, that they are more advanced by that, than by any other way of Government.

2. Another principle which tends to the subverting Government under a pretence of *Liberty*, is, that in case of *Usurpation* upon the *Rights* of the *People*, they may resume the exercise of *Power*, and punish the

the *Supreme Magistrate* himself, if he be guilty of it. Than which there can be no principle imagined more destructive to civil *Societies*, and repugnant to the very nature of *Government*. For it destroys all the obligations of Oaths and Compacts; it makes the solemnest bonds of obedience signifie nothing when the people shall think fit to declare it: it makes every prosperous *Rebellion* just; for no doubt when the power is in the *Rebels* hands, they will justify themselves, and condemn their Sovereign. (And if *Corah*, *Dathan* and *Abiram* had succeeded in their Rebellion against *Moses*, no doubt they would have been called the *Keepers* of the *Liberties* of *Israel*.) It makes all Government dangerous to the persons in whom it is, considering the unavoidable infirmities of it, and the readiness of people to misconstrue the actions of their *Princes*, and their incapacity to judge of them; it not being fit that the reasons of all counsels of *Princes* should be divulged by *Proclamations*. So that there can be nothing wanting to make *Princes* miserable, but that the people want *Power* to make them so. And the supposition of this principle will unavoidably keep up a constant jealousy between the *Prince* and his people;

people: for if he knows their minds, he will think it reasonable to secure himself by all means against their *Power*, and endeavour to keep them as unable to resist as may be: whereby all mutual confidence between a *Prince* and his *People* will be destroyed: and there can be no such way to bring in an arbitrary *Government* into a *Nation*, as that which such Men pretend, to be the only means to keep it out. Besides, this must necessarily engage a Nation in endless disputes about the forfeiture of *Power* into whose hands it falls: whether into the people in common, or some persons particularly chosen by the people for that purpose: for in an established *Government* according to their principles, the King himself is the true representative of the people; others may be chosen for some particular purposes, as proposing Laws, &c. but these cannot pretend by virtue of that choice, to have the full power of the people; and withal, whatever they do against the consent of the people is unlawful; and their power is forfeited by attempting it.

But on the other side, what mighty danger can there be in supposing the persons of *Princes* to be so *sacred*, that no

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sons of violence ought to come near to hurt them? Have not all the ancient *Kingdoms* and *Empires* of the world flourished under the supposition of an unaccountable power in *Princes*? That hath been thought by those who did not own a derivation of their power from *God*, but a just security to their persons, considering the hazards, and the care of Government which they undergo? Have not the people who have been most jealous of their *Liberties*, been fain to have recourse to an unaccountable power, as their last refuge in case of their greatest necessities? I mean the *Romans* in their *Dictators*. And if it were thought not only reasonable, but necessary then, ought it not to be preserved inviolable, where the same *Laws* do give it by which Men have any right to challenge any power at all? Neither doth this give *Princes* the liberty to do what they list; for the *Laws* by which they Govern, do fence in the *rights* and *properties* of Men; and *Princes* do find so great conveniency, ease and security in their Government by *Law*, that the sense of that will keep them far better within the compass of *Laws*, than the *Peoples* holding a Rod over them, which the best *Princes* are like to suffer the most by, and bad will
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but grow desperate by it. Good *Princes* will never need such a curb, because their oaths and promises, their love and tenderness towards their people, the sense they have of a *Power* infinitely greater than theirs, to which they must give an account of all their actions, will make them govern as the *Fathers* of their Country; and bad *Princes* will never value it, but will endeavour by all possible means to secure themselves against it. So that no inconveniency can be possibly so great on the supposition of this unaccountable *Power* in Sovereign *Princes*, taking it in the general, and meerly on the account of reason, as the unavoidable mischiefs of that *Hypotheses*, which places all power originally in the people, and notwithstanding all *oaths* and *bonds* whatsoever to obedience, gives them the liberty to resume it when they please: which will always be when that *Spirit* of *Faction* and *Sedition* shall prevail among them, which ruled here in *Corah* and his company.

2. Another pretence of this Rebellion of *Corah*, was, *the freeing themselves from the encroachments upon their spiritual privileges which were made by the usurpations of Aaron and the Priesthood*. This served for a very popular pretence, for they

knew no reason that one *Tribe* should engross so much of the wealth of the Nation to themselves, and have nothing to do but to attend the service of God for it. What, say they, *are not all the Lord's people holy?* Why may not then all they offer up incense to the Lord, as well as the Sons of *Aaron*? How many publick uses might those *Revenues* serve for, which are now to maintain *Aaron*, and all the Sons of *Levi*? But if there must be some to attend the service of God, why may not the meanest of the people serve for that purpose, those who can be serviceable for nothing else? Why must there be an order of *Priesthood* distinct from that of *Levites*? why a *High-Priest* above all the *Priests*? what is there in all their office which one of the common people may not do as well as they? cannot they slay the sacrifices, and offer incense, and do all other parts of the *Priestly Office*? So that at last they make all this to be a Politick design of *Moses* only to advance his own *Family* by making his *Brother High-Priest*, and to have all the *Priests* and *Levites* at his devotion, to keep the people the better in awe. This hath always been the quarrel at *Religion*, by those who seldom pretend to it, but with a design to destroy

destroy it. For who would ever have minded the constant attendance at the *Temple*, if no encouragements had been given to those who were employed in it? Or is not *Religion* apt enough to be despised of it self, by Men of prophane minds, unless it be rendred more *mean* and *contemptible* by the *Poverty* of those who are devoted to it? Shall not *God* be allowed the priviledge of every *Master* of a *Family*, to appoint the ranks and orders of his own servants, and to take care they be provided for, as becomes those who wait upon him? What a dishonour had this been to the *true God*, when those who worshipped *false Gods* thought nothing too great for those who were employed in the service of them? But never any yet cryed, but he that had a mind to betray his *Master*, to what purpose is all this waste? Let *God* be honoured as he ought to be, let *Religion* come in for its share among all the things which deserve encouragement, and those who are employed in the offices of it, enjoy but what *God*, and *Reason*, and the *Laws* of their *Country* give them, and then we shall see it was nothing, but the *discontent* and *faction* of *Corah* and his company which made any encroachment of *Aaron* and the *Priest-*
hood

hood any pretence for Rebellion.

But all these pretences would not serve to make them escape the severe hand of divine *justice*; for in an extraordinary and remarkable manner he made them suffer the just desert of their sin, for *they perished in their contradiction*: which is the next thing to be considered, *viz.*

2. *The Judgment* which was inflicted upon them for it. They had provoked *Heaven* by their sin, and disturbed the *earth* by their Faction; and the *earth*, as if it were moved with indignation against them, trembled and *shook*, as *Josephus* saith, like waves that are tossed with a mighty wind, and then with a horrid noise it rends asunder, and opens its mouth to swallow those in its bowels who were unfit to live upon the face of it. They had been dividing the people, and the earth to their amazement and ruine divides it self under their feet, as though it had been design'd on purpose, that in their punishment themselves might feel, and others see the mischief of their sin. Their seditious principles seemed to have infected the ground they stood upon; the earth of a sudden proves as unquiet and troublesome as they; but to rebuke their madness, it was only in obedience to

to him who made it the executioner of his wrath against them; and when it had done its office, it is said, (a) *that the* ^{(a) Num. 16. 33.} *earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the Congregation.* Thus the earth having revenged it self against the disturbers of its peace, *Heaven* presently appears with a *flaming fire*, taking vengeance upon the 250 Men, who in opposition to (b) *Aaron, had usurped the Priestly office, in offering incense before the Lord.* ^{(b) V. 35.} Such a *Fire*, if we believe the same Historian, which far outwent the most dreadful eruptions of *Ætna* or *Vesuvius*, which neither the art of Man, nor the power of the wind could raise; which neither the burning of Woods nor Cities could parallel; but such a *Fire* which the wrath of *God* alone could kindle, whose light could be outdone by nothing but the heat of it. Thus *Heaven* and *Earth* agree in the punishment of such disturbers of *Government*, and *God* by this remarkable judgment upon them hath left it upon record to all ages, that all the world may be convinced how displeasing to him the sin of faction and sedition is. For *God* takes all this that was done against *Moses* and *Aaron*, as done against himself. For they are said to be gathered together against the

Lord, v. 11. to provoke the Lord, v. 30. And the fire is said to come out from the Lord: v. 35. And afterwards it is said of

(a) Num.
16. 9.

them; (a) This is that Moses and Dathan and Abiram, who strove against Moses and against Aaron in the company of Corah, when they strove against the Lord. By which we see God interprets striving against the Authority appointed by him, to be a striving against himself. God looks upon himself as immediately concerned in the Government of the world; for by him Princes reign, and they are his Vicegerents upon earth; and they who resist, resist not a meer appointment of the people, but (b) an Ordinance of God; and they who do so shall in the mildest sense receive a severe punishment from him. Let the pretences be never so popular, the persons never so great and famous; nay, though they were of the great Council of the Nation, yet we see God doth not abate of his severity upon any of these considerations.

(b) Rom.
13. 1, 2.

This was the first formed sedition that we read of against Moses, the people had been murmuring before, but they wanted heads to manage them: Now all things concur to a most dangerous Rebellion upon the most popular pretences

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of Religion and Liberty; and now God takes the first opportunity of declaring his hatred of such actions; *that others might hear, and fear, and do no more so presumptuously.* This hath been the usual method of divine Judgments; the first of the kind hath been most remarkably punished in this life, that by it they may see how hateful such things are to God; but if Men will venture upon them notwithstanding, God doth not always punish them so much in this world, (though he sometimes doth) but reserves them, without repentance, to his Justice in the world to come. The first man that sinned was made an example of God's Justice; The first world; the first publick attempt against Heaven at *Babel* after the plantation of the world again; the first Cities which were so generally corrupted after the flood; the first breaker of the *Sabbath* after the *Law*; the first offerers with strange fire; the first lookers into the *Ark*; and here the first popular Rebellion and Usurpers of the office of *Priesthood*. God doth hereby intend to preserve the honour of his *Laws*; he gives men warning enough by one exemplary punishment, and if notwithstanding that, they will commit the same sin, they may

may thank themselves if they suffer for it, if not in this life, yet in that to come. And that good effect this Judgment had upon that people, that although the next day 14000 suffered for murmuring at the destruction of these men, yet we do not find that any Rebellion was raised among them afterwards upon these popular pretences of *Religion*, and the *Power* of the *People*. While their Judges continued (who were *Kings*, without the state and title of *Kings*) they were observed with reverence, and obeyed with diligence. When afterwards they desired a *King*, with all the *Pomp* and *Grandeur* which other Nations had (which *Samuel* acquaints them with, viz. (a) *the Officers and Souldiers*, the large *Revenues* he must have) though their *King* was disowned by *God*, yet the people held firm in their *obedience* to him, and *David* himself, though anointed to be *King*, persecuted by *Saul*, and though he might have pleaded *Necessity* and *Providence* as much as any ever could, (when *Saul* was strangely delivered into his hands,) yet we see what an opinion he had of the person of a bad King, (b) *The Lord forbid that I should do this thing against my Master the Lord's Anointed, to stretch forth my hand against him.*

(a) 1 Sam.
8. 11.

(b) 1 Sam.
26. 9.

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him, seeing he is the Anointed of the Lord. And lest we should think it was only his *Modesty* or his *Policy* which kept him from doing it, he afterwards, upon a like occasion declares, it was only the sin of doing it, which kept him from it. (a) *For who can stretch forth his hand against the Lords Anointed and be guiltless?* Not as though David could not do it *without the power of the Sanhedrin*, as it hath been pretended by the Sons of *Corah* in our age; for he excepts *none*; he never seizes upon him to carry him prisoner to be tryed by the *Sanhedrin*, nor is there any foundation for any such power in the *Sanhedrin* over the persons of their *Sovereigns*. It neither being contained in the grounds of its institution, nor any precedent occurring in the whole story of the Bible, which gives the least countenance to it: Nay, several passages of *Scripture* utterly overthrow it, for how could Solomon have said, (b) *Where the word of a King is, there is power; and who may say unto him, what dost thou?* If by the constitution of their Government, the *Sanhedrin* might have controlled him in what he said or did. But have not several of the modern Jews said so? Granting that some have;

(a) 1 Sam. 26. 9.

(b) Eccles. 8. 4.

have ; yet so they have spoken many unreasonable and foolish things besides ; but yet none of these have said, that it was in the power of the *Sanhedrin* to depose their *Kings*, or put them to death ; all that they say is, that in the cases expressed by the *Law*, if the *Kings* do transgress, the *Sanhedrin* had the power of inflicting the penalty of *scourging*, which yet they deny to have had any *infamy* in it among them. But did not *David* transgress the *Law* in his murder and adultery ? did not *Solomon* in the multitude of his wives and *Idolatry*, yet where do we read that the *Sanhedrin* ever took cognizance of these things ? And the more ancient *Jews* do say, (a) *That the King was not to be judged*, as is plain in the Text of the *Misna*, however the Expositors have taken a liberty to contradict it ; but as far as we can find, without any foundation of reason : and *R. Jeremiah* in (b) *Nachmanides*, saith expressly, *That no creature may judge the King, but the holy and blessed God alone*. But we have an Authority far greater than his, viz. of *David's* in this case, who after he hath denied that *any man can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's Anointed, and be guiltless* ; in the very next words he submits the

(a) *Mt.*
Sanhed.
c. 2.

(b) *Nach-*
man. in
Leut. p.
196.

the judgment of him only to God himself, saying, (a) *As the Lord liveth, the Lord shall smite him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall descend into battle and perish.* He thought it sufficient to leave the judgment of those things to God, whose power over *Princes* he knew was enough, if well considered by them, to keep them in awe. We have now dispatched the first consideration of the words of the Text, as they relate to the fact of *Corah* and his company.

2. We ought now to enquire, whether the *Christian Doctrine* hath made any alteration in these things; or whether that gives any greater encouragement to faction and sedition than the *Law* did, when it is masked under a pretence of zeal for *Religion* and *Liberty*. But it is so far from it, that what God then declared to be displeasing to him by such remarkable judgments, hath been now more fully manifested by frequent precepts, and vehement exhortations, by the most weighty arguments, and the constant practice of the first and the best of Christians, and by the black character which is set upon those who under a pretence of *Christian Liberty* did despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities, and follow

(b) Jude
v. 13.

follow *Corah* in his Rebellion, however they may please themselves with greater *light*, than former ages had in this matter, they are said to be such (a) *for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.* It would take up too much time to examine the frivolous evasions, and ridiculous distinctions by which they would make the case of the Primitive *Christians* in not resisting Authority, so much different from theirs, who have not only done it, but in spite of *Christianity* have pleaded for it. Either they said they *wanted strength, or courage, or the countenance of the Senate*, or did not understand their own *Liberty*; when all their obedience was only due to those precepts of the *Gospel*, which make it so great a part of *Christianity to be subject to Principalities and Powers*, and which the Teachers of the *Gospel* had particularly given them in charge (b) *to put the people in mind of.*

(a) Tit. 3.
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And happy had it been for us if this Doctrine had been more sincerely preached, and duly practised in this Nation; for we should then never have seen those sad times, which we can now no otherwise think of, than of the devouring *Fire*, and raging *Pestilence*, i. e. of such dreadful

dreadful judgments which we have smarted so much by, that we heartily pray we may never feel them again : For then *fears and jealousies* began our miseries, and the *curse* so often denounced *against Meraz*, fell upon the whole Nation ; When the Sons of *Corah* managed their own ambitious designs against *Moses* and *Aaron* (the *King* and the *Church*) under the same pretences of *Religion* and *Liberty*. And when the pretence of *Religion* was broken into *Schisms*, and *Liberty* into oppression of the *people*, it pleased *God* out of his secret and unsearchable judgments to suffer the Sons of *Violence* to prevail against the Lord's *Anointed* ; and then they would know no difference between his being conquered and guilty. They could find no way to justify their former wickedness, but by adding more : The consciousness of their own guilt, and the fears of the punishment due to it, made them unquiet and thoughtful, as long as his life and presence did upbraid them with the one, and made them fearful of the other. And when they found the greatness and constancy of his mind, the firmness of his piety, the zeal he had for the true interest of the people, would not suffer him to betray his *Trust* for the saving

saving of his life ; they charge him with their own guilt, and make him suffer because they had deserved to do it. And as if it had not been enough to have abused the names of *Religion* and *Liberty* before, they resolve to make the very name of *Justice* to suffer together with their *King* : by calling that infamous company, who condemned their *Sovereign*, *A High Court of Justice*, which trampled under foot the *Laws* both of God and men. But lest the world should imagine they had any shame left in their sins, they make the people witnesses of his *Murder* ; and pretend the *Power* of the *People* for doing that, which they did detest and abhor. Thus fell our *Royal Martyr* a sacrifice to the fury of unreasonable men ; who either were so blind as not to see his worth, or rather so bad as to hate him for it. And as *God gave once* to the people of the *Jews* a *King in his Anger*, being provoked to it by their sins, we have cause to say, that upon the same account *he took away* one of the best of *Kings from us in his wrath*. But blessed be that *God*, who in the midst of judgment was pleased to remember mercy, in the miraculous preservation, and glorious restoration of
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our Gracious Sovereign ; let us have a care then of abusing the mercies of so great a deliverance to quite other ends than *God* intended it for ; lest he be provoked to say to us, as he did of old to the *Jews*, (a) *But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your King.* And if we look on this as a dreadful judgment, let us endeavour to prevent it by a timely and sincere reformation of our lives, and by our hearty supplications to *God* that he would preserve the person of our *Sovereign* from all the attempts of violence, that he would so direct his counsels, and prosper his affairs, that *His Government* may be a long and publick Blessing to these Nations.

(a) 1 Sam.
12. 25.

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SERMON VIII.

Preached at

Guild-Hall Chappel.

JUNE 9th. 1671.

Matthew XXI. 43.

Therefore say I unto you, the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a Nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

(a) Matth.
5. 44.

THE time was now very near approaching, wherein the Son of God was to suffer an accursed death by the hands of ungrateful men: and to let them see that he laid no impossible command upon men when he bid them (a) *love their enemies*; he expresses the truest kindness himself towards those who designed his destruction. For what can be imagined greater towards such, whose

whose malice was like to end in nothing short of their own ruine, than by representing to them the evils they must suffer, to dissuade them from that, which they intended to do ? But if neither the sense of their future miseries, nor their present sins will at all abate their fury or assuage their malice, nothing is then left for kindness to shew it self by, but by lamenting their folly, bemoaning their obstinacy, and praying God to have pity upon them, who have so little upon themselves. And all these were very remarkable in the carriage of our Blessed Saviour towards his most implacable enemies : he had taken care to instruct them by his doctrine ; to convince them by his miracles, to oblige them by the first offers of the greatest mercy ; but all these things had no other effect upon them, than to heighten their malice, increase their rage, and make them more impatient till they had destroyed him. But their stupidity made him more sensible of their folly, and their obstinacy stirred up his compassion towards them, insomuch that the nearer he approached to his own sufferings, the greater sense he expressed of theirs. For he was no sooner come within view of that bloody

(a) Luke
19. 41, 42.

(b) Matth.
23. 37.

City, wherein he was within few days to suffer *by*, as well as *for* the sins of men; but his compassion breaks forth, not only by his weeping over it; but by that passionate expression, which is abrupt only by the force of his grief: (a) *If thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.* And when he was within the City, he could not mention the desolation which was to come upon it for all the righteous blood which had been spilt there, but he presently subjoyns, (b) *O Hierusalem, Hierusalem, thou that killest the Prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy Children together, as a Flen gathereth her Chickens under her wings and ye would not?* what words could more emphatically express the love and tenderness of Christ towards his greatest enemies than these do, especially considering that he knew how busie they were in contriving his sufferings, while he was so passionately lamenting theirs. And when their malice had done its utmost upon him, and they saw him hanging upon the Cross and ready to yield up his last breath, he employs the remainder of it in begging pardon for them

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them, in those pathetical words (a) *Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.* By all which we see, that what punishments soever the Jewish Nation underwent afterwards for the great sin of crucifying the Lord of life, were no effect of meer revenge from him upon them, but the just judgment of God which they had drawn upon themselves by their own obstinacy and wilful blindness.

And that they might not think themselves surprized, when the dreadful effects of God's anger should seize upon them, our Saviour as he drew nearer to the time of his sufferings gives them more frequent and serious warnings of the sad consequence of their incorrigibleness under all the means of cure which had been used among them. For they were so far from being amended by them, that they not only despised the remedy, but the Physicians too; (as though that were a small thing) they beat, they wound, they kill those who came to cure them: but as if it had not been enough to have done these things to servants, (to let the world see how dangerous it is to attempt the cure of incorrigible sinners) when God sent his own Son to them, expecting they should re-

verence him, they find a peculiar reason
 (a) V. 38. for taking him out of the way, *(a) for then the inheritance would be their own.*
 But so miserably do sinners miscarry in their designs for their advantage, that those things which they build their hopes the most upon prove the most fatal and pernicious to them: When these persons thought themselves sure of the inheritance by killing the Son, that very sin of theirs, not only put them out of possession, but out of the hopes of recovering what interest they had in it before. For upon this it is that our Saviour here saith in the words of the Text, *Therefore say I unto you, that the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.*

Which words, are the application which our Saviour makes of the foregoing parable concerning the vineyard, which it seems the Chief Priests and Pharisees, did not apprehend themselves to be concerned in, till he brought the application of it so close to them; so that then they find they had condemned themselves, when they so readily passed so severe a sentence upon those husbandmen, who had so ill requited the Lord of the Vineyard for all the care he had taken about it, that in-
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stead of sending him the fruits of it, they abuse his messengers, and at last murder his Son. When therefore Christ asks them, (a) *When the Lord therefore of the Vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?* They thought the case so plain, that they never take time to consider, or go forth to advise upon it, but bring in a present answer upon the evidence of the fact. (b) *They say unto him, he will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his Vineyard to other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.* Little did they think what a dreadful sentence they passed upon themselves and their own nation in these words; little did they think that hereby they condemned their Temple to be burned, their City to be destroyed, their Country to be ruined; their Nation to be Vagabonds over the face of the earth; little did they think that herein they justified God in all the miseries which they suffered afterwards, for in these words they vindicate God and condemn themselves, they acknowledge God's Justice in the severest punishments he should inflict upon such obstinate wretches. Our Saviour having gained this confession from them, and so made it impossible for

them to start back in charging God with injustice in punishing them; he now applies it to themselves in these words, which I suppose, ought immediately to follow the 41. verse, *Therefore say I unto you the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, &c.* Wherein we have,

1. The greatest judgment which can ever befall a people, which is *the taking away the Kingdom of God from them.*

2. The greatest mercy can ever be vouchsafed to a nation, which is God's giving his Kingdom to it. *And give it to a nation, &c.*

In the Judgment we consider the cause of it, *therefore say I unto you, &c.* which is either, more general as referring to all going before, and so it makes the taking away the Kingdom of God to be the just punishment of an incorrigible people; or more particular as referring to the sin of the Jews in crucifying Christ, and so it makes the guilt of that sin to be the cause of all the miseries, which that nation hath undergone since that time.

In the latter part we may consider the terms upon which God either gives or continues his Kingdom to a Nation, and that is, *bringing forth the fruits thereof.*

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We consider the former with a particular respect to the state of the Jewish Nation. And therein, 1. The greatness of their judgment implied in those words *the Kingdom of God*, &c. 2. The particular reason of that judgment, which was crucifying the Son of God.

1. The greatness of the judgment which befel the Jewish Nation after imbruing their hands in the blood of Christ. And that will appear if we take *the Kingdom of God* in that double notion in which it was taken at that time. 1. It was taken by the Jews themselves for some peculiar and temporal blessings, which those who enjoyed it had above all other people. 2. It was taken by our Saviour for a clearer manifestation of the will of God to the world, and the consequence of that in the hearts of good men; and all the spiritual blessings which do attend it. So that the taking away *the Kingdom of God* from them must needs be the heaviest judgment which could befall a people, since it implies in it, the taking away all the greatest temporal and spiritual blessings.

1. We take it in the notion the Jews themselves had of it; and in this sense we shall make it evident that *the Kingdom*
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of God hath been taken from that people in accomplishment of this prediction of our Saviour. For they imagined the *Kingdom of God* among them to consist in these things especially, *Deliverance from their enemies*, a *flourishing state*, the *upholding their Religion in Honour*, chiefly in the pompous worship of the Temple. Now if instead of these things, they were exposed to the fury of their enemies so as never any nation besides them were, if their whole Polity was destroyed so as the very face of Government hath ever since been taken from them, if their Religion hath been so far from being upheld, that the practice of it hath been rendered impossible by the destruction of the Temple, and the consequences of it, then the Jews themselves cannot but say, that in their own sense *the Kingdom of God* hath been taken from them.

I. They make *the Kingdom of God* to consist in a *deliverance of them from their enemies*. For this was their great quarrel at our Saviour that he should pretend to bring the Kingdom of God among them, and do nothing in order to their deliverance from the *Roman Power*. They either were such great admirers of the Pomp and Splendor of the world, or

so sensible of their own burdens and the yoke that was upon them, that they could not be perswaded that God should design to send his Kingdom among them for any other end but their ease and liberty. They apprehended the Crown of Thorns which was put upon our Saviour's head was the fittest representation of the nature of his Kingdom; for they looked upon it as the meer shew of a Kingdom, but the reality was nothing but affliction and tribulation; and this was a doctrine they thought of all others the least needful to be preached to them, who complained so much of what they underwent already. They took it for the greatest contradiction to talk of a Kingdom among them, as long as they were in subjection to the Roman Governours. But if Jesus of Nazareth had raised an army in defence of their liberty, and had destroyed the Romans, they would never have enquired farther concerning Prophecies, or Miracles, this had been instead of all others to them, and then they would willingly have given him that title, which was set up only in derision as the Elogium of his Cross, *Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews*: But we see how justly God dealt with them soon after, when they crucified the Son of God because

because he preached another Kingdom than they dreamed of, God suffers this very pretence of a temporal Kingdom to be the occasion of the ruine of the whole Nation. For upon that it was that they denied subjection to the Romans, for they were for no other Kingdom but only God's, (*Θεὸν μόνον ἡγεῖσθαι δεσπότην*, *to acknowledge no other King but God*, was the pretence of the War:) upon which arose that desperate Faction of the Zealots, who like so many Firebrands scattered up and down among them, soon put the whole Nation into Flames. And from this time there never was a more Tragical story either acted or written than that is of the miseries which this people underwent. For if ever there were the marks of divine vengeance seen in the ruine of a Nation, they were in that. For they were so far from hearkening to the counsel of their wisest men, that the first thing they made sure of, was the destruction of them. Wisdom was but another name for Treason among them: and there needed no other evidence to take away the lives of any, but to say that they were rich and wise. When they had thus secured themselves (as they thought) against the danger of too much Wisdom, by the removal of

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all such, who at least did not counterfeit
madness and folly by joyning with them;
then they began to suspect one another,
and three Factions at once break forth at
Hierusalem, who seemed to be afraid the
Romans should not destroy them fast e-
nough, for in the several parts of the Ci-
ty where they were, they were continually
killing one another: and never joyned to-
gether but when they saw the Romans ap-
proaching their Walls, lest they should
take that work out of each others hands.
By all means they were resolv'd to endure
a seige, and as a preparative for that, they
burnt up almost all the stores of provisi-
on which were among them: whence en-
sued a most dreadful famine, so great,
that it was thought reason enough to take
away the life of a man, because he look-
ed better than his neighbours, they there-
by suspecting he had some concealed pro-
visions. They brake into the houses of
such whom they imagined to be eating,
and if they found them so, they either for-
ced the meat out of their mouths, or
choaked them with attempting to do it.
It was no news then for a Woman to for-
get her sucking Child, so as not to have
compassion upon the Son of her Womb: for
the story is remarkable in (a) *Jose-*
phus,

Jos. ἀλώτ.
l. 6. c. 11.
p. 932.

(a) *Lib. 5.*
c. 28.

phus, of a Mother that not only eat part of her Son, who sucked at her breast, but when the smell had tempted some to break in upon her and take part with her, and were struck with horror at the sight of it, *What*, saith she, *will you shew your selves more tender than a Woman, or more compassionate than a Mother!* It was no news to see Parents and Children destroying one another for a piece of bread, to see the streets and tops of houses covered with the bodies of those who dropt down for want of food, in-so-much that the stench of their carcases soon brought a Plague among them: which and the Famine raged together with that violence, that when there was no possibility of burying their dead, they threw them over the Walls of the City, and *Titus* beholding the incredible numbers of them lift up his hands to Heaven and cried, *ὡς εἶναι τὸ ἔργον αὐτοῦ*, *that it was none of his doing.* For he used all possible means to prevent the ruine of the City and Temple as well as the destruction of the People: but all to no purpose, for now the time of God's vengeance was come, yea the full time of his wrath was come. So that *Titus* often confessed, he never saw such an instance of divine vengeance upon

on a people, that when their enemies designed to save them, they were resolved to destroy themselves. And (a) *Philos- (a) Philost.
v. Apollon.
L6. cap. 14.*
stratus tells us, that when the neighbour Provinces offered *Titus* a Crown, in token of his conquest of *Judæa*, he utterly refused it with this saving, *That he had nothing to do in the glory of that action, for he was only the instrument of God's vengeance upon the Jews.* Which we may easily believe, if we consider almost the incredible number of those who were destroyed at that time, 1100000 reckoned in that number in the time of eight months siege, and 90000 carried away captive, which might have been thought incredible, but for one circumstance, which is mentioned by their own Historian, that at the time of the siege *Hierusalem* was filled with Jews coming from all parts to the solemnity of the Passover, where they were shut up as in a Prison: and their Prison made their place of Execution. Yea so prodigious were the calamities which beset this people not only at *Hierusalem*, but at *Cæsarea*, *Antioch*, *Scythopolis*, *Alexandria*, and almost all the Cities of *Syria*, that *Eliazer*, one of the heads of the Faction, when he saw they could not hold out against the Romans at *Massada*,
perswaded

(a) Jos. p.
990.

perswaded them all to kill one another by this argument, (a) *That it was now apparent that God from the beginning of the War had designed their destruction, and they had better be the executioners of his vengeance themselves than suffer the Romans to be so.* Upon which they all miserably destroyed each other: who were the last that opposed the Roman Power.

What shall we say then to these things? Have we any ground to suspect the truth of the story as either made by Christians in hatred of the Jews, or improved mightily to their disadvantage? Not so certainly, when all the circumstances are related by Jewish and Roman Writers, who had no kindness at all for Christians. Or shall we say there was nothing extraordinary in all this, but that the Jews were a wild and seditious people that destroyed themselves and their nation? but it is evident they were not always so; they had been a people that had flourished with the reputation of wisdom and conduct, and had great success against their enemies. And the Romans themselves at this time acknowledged they never saw a people of a more invincible spirit and less afraid of dying than these were.

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but there was a hand-writing upon the Wall against them, *Mene, Tekel, Peres*, God had weigh'd them in the ballance and found them too light, he divides their Nation and removes his Kingdom from them and leaves them to an utter desolation. Neither can we say, *this was some present infatuation upon them*, for ever since all their attempts for recovering their own land, have but increased their miseries and made their condition worse than before. Witness that great attempt under *Babeccebas* in the time of *Adrian*, in which the Jews themselves say, there perished double the number of what came out of *Egypt*, *i. e.* above 1200000 men. After which they were not only wholly banished their land, but forbid so much as to look on the place where the Temple had stood, and were fain to purchase at a dear rate, the liberty of weeping over it; (a) *ut qui quondam emerant sanguinem Christi, emanant lachrymas suas*; as *St. Hierom* speaks; *i. e.* that they who had bought the blood of Christ were now fain to buy their own tears. It would be endless to pursue the miseries of this wretched people in all ages ever since; the slavery, disgrace, universal contempt, the frequent banishments, confiscations of estates, constant oppressions

(a) *Hieron.*
in *Zeph. i.*

sions which they have laboured under. So that from that time to this, they have scarce had any Estates, but never any Country which they could call their own. So that St. *Augustin* hath truly said, (a) *the curse of Cain is upon them*, for they are vagabonds in the earth, they have a mark upon them, so that they are not destroyed and yet are in continual fear of being so. God seems to preserve that miserable Nation in being, to be a constant warning to all others, to let them see what a difference in the same people the Favour or Displeasure of God can make, and how severe the Judgments of God are upon those who are obstinate and disobedient.

2. They make *the Kingdom of God* to consist in *the flourishing of their State*, or that *Polity* which God established among them. He was himself once their immediate Governour and therefore it might be properly called *his Kingdom*: and after they had Kings of their own their plenty and prosperity did so much depend on the kindness of Heaven to them, that all the days of their flourishing condition might be justly attributed to a more than ordinary providence that watched over them. For if we consider how small in comparison the extent and compass of the

whole land of *Judea* was, being as *Saint Hierom* saith, (who knew it well) but 160 miles in length from *Dan* to *Beersheba*, and 46 in breadth from *Joppa* to *Bethlehem*; if we consider likewise the vast number of its inhabitants, there being at (a) *David's* numbering the people 1500000 fighting men who ought not to be reckoned above a fourth part of the whole, and *Benjamin* and *Levi* not taken in; if we add to these, the many rocks, mountains and desarts in this small country, and that every seven years the most fertile places must lye fallow, we may justly wonder how all this number of people should prosper so much in so narrow a territory. For although we ought not to measure the rules of Eastern diet by those of our Northern Climates, and it be withall true, that the number of people add both to the riches and plenty of it, and that the fertile places of that land were so almost to a miracle, yet considering their scarcity of rain and their Sabbatical years, we must have recourse to an immediate care of heaven which provided for all their necessities, and filled their stores to so great abundance that (b) *Solomon* gave to *King Hiram* every year 20000 measures of wheat, and twenty measures of oyl; every

(a) 1 Chr.
15, 5, 6.

(b) 1 Kings
5. 11.

every one of which contained about 30 bushels. And God himself had particularly promised to give them *the former and the latter rain*, and that they might have no occasion to complain of their *Sabbatical* years (a) *every sixth year* (a) Lev. *should afford them fruit for 3 years.* By ^{25. 21.} which we see their plenty depended not so much upon *the fat of their land*, as upon *the dew and blessing of heaven*. And if we farther consider them as environed about with enemies on every side, such as were numerous and powerful, implacable and subtle, it is a perpetual wonder (considering the constitution of the Jewish Nation) that they should not be destroyed by them. For all the males being obliged strictly by the Law to go up three times a year to *Hierusalem* (we should think against all rules of Policy to leave the country naked) it seems incredible that their enemies should not over-run the Country, and destroy their Wives and Children at that time. But all their security was in the promise which God had made; (b) *neither shall* (a) Exod. *any man desire thy land, when thou shalt* ^{34. 24.} *go up to appear before the Lord thy God thrice in the year.* And to let us see that obedience to God is the best security a-

gainst the greatest dangers, we never read of any invasion of that Country in one of those times, nor of any miseries they suffer'd then; till the last and fatal destruction of *Hierusalem* when God had taken away his Kingdom from them. And with that, their whole Polity fell; for never since have they been able to maintain so much as the face of Government, living in subjection, if not in slavery in all parts of the world. So that whether we mean the succession of power in *Judah's* tribe, or the seat of power in the whole Nation, or the distinction and superiority of that tribe above the rest, by the *Scepter* which was not (a) to depart from *Judah* till *Shiloh* came; we are sure in every one of these senses, it is long since departed from it. For neither have any of the Posterity of *David* had any power over them, nor was it possible they should, considering that all Government is taken from them, and the very distinction of tribes is lost among them, they having never had any certain Genealogies since the destruction of the Temple. I know what vain hopes, and foolish fancies, and incredible stories they have among them; of some supreme power, which they have in some

(a) Gen.
49. 10.

part

part of the world but they know not where. Sometimes, they talk of their mighty numbers at *Bagdad*, and the officers of their own Nation which are set over them: but had they not so in *Egypt*, and were they ever the less in *captivity* there? Sometimes they boast of their Schools in those Eastern parts, such as *Pumbeditha*, *Sura*, and *Nebarda*, and the authority the *Rabbins* have over them; but this is just as the Orator said of *Dionysius* the *Tyrant* of *Syracuse*, that he loved Government so well, that when he was not suffered to govern men there, he went to govern Boys at *Corinth*, (a) *us-* (a) *Cic.*
que eò imperio carere non poterat. But *Tusc. 3.*
these are tolerable in comparison with the incredible fictions of the four Tribes in the East, hem'd in by a vast and unpassable ridge of mountains on every side, but when the famous *Sabbatical River* runs, which for six days bears all before it with a mighty torrent, and carries stones of such incredible bigness that there is no passing over it: but because the admirable nature of that River is (b) *Eldad.*
That it keeps the Sabbath and rests all that *Danita a-*
day, we might have thought it had been *pud Bux-*
possible to have had some intercourse *torf & Sab-*
with them on that day; but to prevent *bation.*
Prof. in
Cof. P. Em.
percur in
Benjam. p.
206, 207.

this they tell us, *That as the water goes off, flames of fire come in the place of it and hinder all access to them.* But these are things which a man must be a Jew first before he can believe : and what will not they believe rather than Christ is the Son of God ! For (a) *Manasse ben Israel* hath had the confidence in this age to say, *That the sand taken out of the Sabbatical River and preserved in a Tube doth constantly move for six days, and rests punctually from the beginning of the Sabbath to the end of it.* Which is the less to be wondred at since in all his Book of the hope of Israel, he eagerly contends for the incredible fiction of *Montezini* of the flourishing condition of the Jews at this day in some parts of *America* ; but the *Salvo* is translated thither too, for there is a mighty River which hinders any from access to them. By all which we see how vain all their attempts are to preserve any reputation of that power and Government wherein they made so great a part of *the Kingdom of God* among them to consist.

3. That which they thought gave them the greatest Title to the being God's peculiar people, was the *solemn worship of him at the Temple.* But what is become of all the glory of that now ? where are all the

(a) *Spes Israel. sect.*
19. p. 64

the pompous Ceremonies, the numerous Sacrifices, the magnificent and solemn Feasts, which were to be constantly observed there? how is it then possible for them to observe the Religion now which God commanded them; since he likewise forbid the doing these things any where, but in the Place which himself should appoint? So that they are under an unavoidable necessity of breaking their Law; if they do them not, they break the Law which commands them to be done; if they do them, they break the Law which forbids the doing them in any other place but at the Temple at *Hierusalem*. And this I am apt to think, was one of the greatest grounds among them, after the destruction of the Temple, of their setting up Traditions above the written Law; for finding it impossible to keep the written Law, if they could gain to themselves the Authority of interpreting it, they were not much concerned for the Law it self. And this is one of the strongest holds of their infidelity at this day. For otherwise we might in reason have thought, that their infidelity would have been buried in the ashes of their Temple; when they had such plain predictions that the *Messias* was to come during
the

the second Temple, that the prediction of Christ concerning the destruction of this Temple was so exactly fulfilled, that all attempts for the rebuilding of it were vain and fruitless. Of all which none promised so fair as that in *Julians* time, who out of spight to the Christians, and particularly with a design to contradict the prophecy of our Saviour gave all encouragement to the Jews to build it, he provided at his own charge all materials for it, and gave command to the Governor of the Province to take particular care in it; and the Jews with great joy and readiness set about it; but when they began to search the ground in order to the laying the Foundations, the earth round about trembles with a horrible earthquake, and the flames of a sudden break out, which not only consumed the undertakers but a great multitude of spectators, and the materials prepared for the building: Insomuch that an universal astonishment seized upon them, and the rest had rather leave their work than be consumed by it. This we have delivered to us; not by persons at a great distance of time from it, but by such who lived in the same age: (a) *ὅτι τὸ αὐτὸ*

(a) Orat.

2. c. Jud.

μαρτυροῦντες ἡμεῖς τὰς ἀνάγκας, ὡς ὅτι ὅλοι ἐσμὲν ὁμολογῆσαι

(said)

(saith St. Chrysost.) of the truth of these things; not by one or two, but the concurrent Testimony of the writers of that age. Not only by (a) St. Chrysost. but *Gregorius Nazianzenus, Ambrose, Ruffinus, Soerates, Sozomen, Theodoret.* And lest all these should be suspected of partiality, because Christians, we desire no more to be believed concerning it, than what is recorded by *Ammianus Marcellinus* a Heathen Historian of that time, who was a Soldier under *Julian* in his last expedition, and he asserts the substance of what I have said before. And what a strange difference do we now find in the building of a third and a second Temple? In the former, though they met with many troubles and difficulties, yet God carried them through all and prospered their endeavours with great success. Now they had all humane encouragements and God only opposes them, and makes them desist with the loss of their workmen and materials, and perpetual dishonour to themselves, for attempting to fight against God in building him a Temple against his will. From which we see that in all the senses the Jews understood *the Kingdom of God*, it was remarkably taken from them within so many years after

(a) Chrys.
in Math.
hom. in
Act. Rom.
41. Nazi-
an. Orat.
2 in Julian.
Amm. Ep.
29. Theod.
Impr. Ruf-
fin. l. 1. c.
38. 39. So-
crat. l. 3.
c. 20. So-
zom. l. 5.
c. 22. Theod.
l. 3. c. 17.
Amm. Mar-
cell. Hist. l.
23. int.

after Christ the true Passover was slain by them, as had passed from their first Passover after their going out of *Ægypt* to their entrance into *Canaan*.

The Difficulty will be far less, and the concernment not so great as to the Jews, to prove that the *Kingdom of God* in the sense our Saviour meant it for *the Power of the Gospel*, was taken from them. For the event it self is a clear proof of it. In stead of that therefore I shall now prove that this taking away the Kingdom of God from them, was the effect of their sin in crucifying Christ. *Therefore I say, &c.* To make this clear I shall proceed by these following steps.

1. That it is acknowledged by the Jews themselves that these great calamities have happened to them for some extraordinary sins. For to these they impute the destruction of the City and Temple, their oppressions and miseries ever since, and the deferring the coming of the *Messias*. For some of them have confessed (a) *That all the terms prefixed for the coming of the Messias are past long ago, but that God provoked by their great sins hath thus long deferred his appearance, and suffered them in the mean while to lye under such great calamities.*

(a) *Tir:
Sanhed. c.
11. sect. 31.*

2. The

2. The sin ought to be looked on as so much greater by how much heavier and longer this punishment hath been, than any inflicted upon them before. For if God did in former captivities punish them for their sins, when they were brought back again into their own land after 70 years; we must conclude that this is a sin of a higher nature which hath not been expiated by 1600 years captivity and dispersion.

3. The Jews have not suffered these calamities for the same sins for which they suffered before. For then God charged them with Idolatry as the great provoking sin; and it is very observable that the Jews were never freer from the suspicion of this sin than under the second Temple, and particularly near their destruction. They generally pretended a mighty zeal for their Law, and especially opposed the least tendency to Idolatry; insomuch that they would not suffer the *Roman* Ensigns to be advanced among them because of the Images that were upon them; and all the History of that time tells us of the frequent contests they had with the *Roman* Governours about these things: and ever since that time they have been perfect haters of
Idolatry

Idolatry, and none of the least hindrances of their embracing Christianity hath been the infinite scandal which hath been given them by the *Roman Church* in that particular.

4. It must be some sin, which their Fathers committed and continues yet unrepented of by them to this day. Their Fathers committing it, was the meritorious cause of the first punishment; their Children not repenting of it, is the cause why that judgment lies still so heavy upon them. And now what sin can we imagine this to be, but putting to death the true *Messias*, which they will acknowledge themselves to be a sin that deserves all the miseries they have undergone; and it is apparent that in all this long captivity they never have had the heart to repent of the Sin of crucifying Christ; other sins they confess and say they heartily repent of, but why then hath not God accepted of their repentance and brought them back into their own Land; according to the promises he long since made unto their Fathers? Which is a certain argument it is some sin, as yet unrepented of by them, which continues them under all their sufferings; and what can this be but that horrid sin of putting

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to death the Son of God, with that dreadful imprecation which to this day hath its force upon them, *His blood be upon us and our Children?* and this sin they are so far from repenting of, that they still justify their Fathers in what they did, and blaspheme Christ to this day in their prayers, where they think they may do it with safety. And to all this we may add that the ensuing calamities were exactly foretold by that Christ whom they crucified, and if no other argument would convince them that he was at least a Prophet, yet the punctual accomplishment of all his predictions ought to do it: as will appear by comparing (a) *Matth. 24.* ^{(a) Matth. 24 3.} with the series of the story. And it is observable that the very place where our Saviour foretold these things, *viz. the Mount of Olives*, was the first wherein the Roman Army encamped before *Hierusalem*. And as they had crucified the Son of God, and put the Lord of glory to open shame, mocking and deriding him in his sufferings; so when the Romans came to revenge his quarrel upon them, they took the captive Jews and crucified them openly in the view of the City, 500. oft-times in a day, *ἄλλον ἄλλω χύματι πρὸς χλευσιν*, *in different forms for sport*

(a) *Joseph. sport sake*, as (a) *Josephus* tells us, who was then in the *Roman* camp; and withal adds, *αλας. 1. 6.* their numbers were so great that there was no room left for the crosses to stand, or wood enough to make crosses of. And they who had bought the blood of the Son of God for Thirty pieces of silver had this sin of theirs severely punished, when such multitudes of the Jews (2000 in one one night) had their bowels ripped up by the *Roman* Souldiers in hopes to have found the gold and silver there, which they were supposed to have swallowed. And what greater argument can we have to believe that such judgments fell upon them upon the account of their sin in crucifying Christ, than that they were so punctually foretold so long before, and had all things so exactly answering in the accomplishment of them? For when Christ spake those things the Jews thought their destruction as incredible as that he was the *Messias*; but what greater evidence could there be to them that he was so, than that God did so severely avenge his blood upon them, and continues to do it for their unbelief and impenitency to this very day.

But it may be some will say, *What are all these things to us, we are none of those who crucified*

crucified Christ or justifie the doing it ; Thanks be to God, the Kingdom of God is not taken from us, but we enjoy what was taken from them ? To which I answer ; If we really were what we pretend to be, these things are of great consequence to be considered by us.

1. For is it nothing to us to have so great an argument of the truth of our Religion, as the sufferings of the Jews to this day is for the sin of crucifying Christ? As often as we think of them we ought to consider the danger of infidelity, and the heavy judgments which that brings upon a people. We may take some estimate of the wrath of God against that sin, by the desolation of the Country, and the miseries of the inhabitants of it. When you think it a small sin to despise the Son of God, to revile his doctrine, and reproach his miracles, consider then what the Jews have suffered for these sins. As long as they continue a people in the world, they are the living monuments of the Vengeance of God upon an incorrigible and unbelieving Nation. And it may be one of the ends of God's dispersing them almost among all nations, that as often as they see and despise them, they may have a care of those sins which have
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màde them a byword and reproach among men, who were once a nation beloved of God and feared by men. See what it is to despise the offers of grace, to reproach and ill use the Messengers of it who have no other errand but to perswade men to accept that Grace and bring forth the fruits thereof. See what it is for men to be slaves to their own lusts, which makes them not only neglect their own truest interest but that of their nation too. If that had not been the fundamental miscarriage of the Rulers of the Jewish Nation at the time of our Saviour, they would most readily have entertained him and saved their land from ruine. See what it is for a people to be high in conceit of themselves and to presume upon God's favour towards them. For there never was a nation more self-opinionated as to their wisdom, goodness, and interest with God than the Jews were when they began their war: and the confidence of this made them think it long till they had destroyed themselves. See what it is to be once engaged too far in a bad cause, how hard it is though they suffer never so much for it afterwards, for them to repent of it. We might have thought the Jews
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when they had seen the destruction of *Jerusalem* would have come off from their obstinacy ; but how very few in comparison from that time to this, have sincerely repented of the sins of their Forefathers in the death of Christ. See how hard a matter it is to conquer the prejudices of education, and to condemn the most unjust actions of those when we come to understanding, whom from our infancy we had in veneration. For it is in great measure because they were their Ancestors, that the Jews to this day are so hardly convinced they could be guilty of so foul a sin as crucifying the *Messias*.

2. Is it nothing to us what they have suffered, who enjoy the greatest blessings we have, by their means, and upon the same terms which they did? For *to them at first were committed the Oracles of God*, we enjoy all the excellent and sacred records of ancient times from them, all the prophecies of the men whom God raised up and inspired from time to time among them. By their means we converse with those great persons, *Moses, David, Solomon* and others, and understand their wisdom and piety by the writings which at this day we enjoy. By them we have

conveyed to us, all the particular prophecies which relate to the *Messias*, which point out the Tribe, the place, the time, the very person he was to be born of. By their means we are able to confute their infidelity, and to confirm our own faith. Therefore we have some common concernment with them, and ought on that account to be sensible of their miseries. Is it nothing then to you that God hath dealt so severely with them, from whom you derive so great a part of your Religion? But if that be nothing, consider the terms upon which you enjoy these mercies you have; and they are as the latter clause of the Text assures us, no other than *the bringing forth the fruits thereof*. If we prove as obstinate and incorrigible as they, God may justly punish us, as he hath done them. It is but a *Vineyard* that God lets us, it is no *inheritance*; God expects our improvement and giving him the fruits of it, or else he may justly take it away from us and give it to other Husbandmen. Let us never flatter our selves in thinking it impossible God should make us as miserable and contemptible a people as he hath done the Jews; but we may be miserable enough and yet fall short of them.

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them. Have we any such promises of his favour as they had? how great were their priviledges while they stood in favour with God above all other nations in the world? (a) But we see, though (a) Rom. they were the first and the *natural* 9. 4, 5. *branches, they are broken off by unbelief, and we stand by faith.* Nothing then can be more reasonable than the exhortation of the Apostle, (b) *be not high minded* (b) Rom. *but fear.* Boast not of your present priviledges; despise not those who are broken off for consider, *if God spared not* V. 21. *the natural branches, we ought to take heed, lest he also spare not us.*

3. Is it nothing to us what the Jews suffer, since our sins are in some senses more aggravated than theirs were? For though there can be no just excuse made for their wilful blindness, yet there may be much less made for ours. For what they did against him was when he appeared in the weakness of humane flesh, in a very mean and low condition, before the great confirmation of our faith, by his resurrection from the dead: But our contempt of Christ is much more unpardonable, not only after that, but the miraculous consequences of it, and the spreading and continuance of his Do-

Grine in the world, after the multitudes of Martyrs and the glorious Triumphs of our Religion over all the attempts of the persecutors and betrayers of it; after the solemn Vows of our Baptism in his Name, and frequent addresses to God by him, and celebrating the memory of his death and passion. What can be more mean, and ungrateful, what can shew more folly and weakness than after all these to esteem the blood of Christ no otherwise than as of a common malefactor, or at least to live as if we so esteemed it: Nay, we may add to all this, after so severe an instance of God's vengeance already upon the Jews; which ought to increase our care, and will therefore aggravate our sin. What the Jews did they did as open and professed enemies, what we do we do as false and perfidious friends, and let any man judge which is the greater crime, to assault an Enemy, or to betray a Friend.

4. Can this be nothing to us who have so many of those *Symptoms* upon us which were the fore-runners of their desolation? Not as though I came hither like the son of *Anani* in the Jewish story, who of a sudden, four years before the war, cryed out in the Temple,

ple, a voice from the East, a voice from the West, a voice from the four Winds, Woe to Jerusalem, Woe to the Temple, Woe to all this People; and this he continued crying, saith *Josephus*, for seven years and five months, till at last being upon the Walls of the City, he cryed, Woe to my self also, and immediately a Stone came out from one of the Roman Engines and dispatched him. God forbid we should be so near a desolation as they were then; but yet our Symptoms are bad, and without our Repentance and amendment God knows what they may end in. There were these following remarkable forerunners of desolation in the Jewish state, I am afraid we are too much concerned in.

1. A strange degeneracy of all sorts of men from the vertues of their Ancestors. This *Josephus* often mentions and complains of, and that there was no sort of men free; from the highest to the meanest, they had all degenerated not only from what they ought to be, but from what their Ancestors were. And there can be nothing which bodes worse to a people than this doth; for the decay of vertue is really the loss of strength and interest. And if this be not among us

at this day in one sense, it must be in another, or else there would never be such general complaints of it as there are. It is hard to say that there hath ever been an Age, wherein vice, such as the very Heathens abhorred, hath been more confident and daring than in this; wherein so many have not barely left vertue, but have bid defiance to it; and are ashamed of their Baptism for nothing so much as because therein they renounced the Devil and all his works; These are the *Zealots* in wickedness as the Jews were in faction. The flaming sword; the voice in the Temple, the terrible Earthquakes, were not greater Prodigies in nature among them, than men are in Morality among us, nor sadder presages of future miseries.

2. A general stupidity and inapprehensiveness of common danger: every one had a mighty zeal for his little party and faction he was engaged in, and would venture his life for that, never considering that by this means there was no more left to do, for the *Romans*, but to stand by and see them destroy one another. I pray God that may be never said of the *Romans* in another sense concerning this Church of ours. We cannot
but

but be sensible how much they are pleased at our divisions, and they have always hay and stubble enough, not only to build with, but thereby to add fuel to our flames. How happy should we be if we could once lay aside our petty animosities, and all mind the true interest of our Church and the security of the Protestant Religion by it, which ought to be dearer to us than our lives! But that is our misery, that our divisions in Religion have made us not more contemptible, than ridiculous to foreign nations, and it puzzleth the wisest among our selves to find out expedients to keep us from ruining one of the best Churches of the Christian world.

3. An Atheistical contempt of Religion: for *Josephus* who was apt enough to flatter his Country-men, tel's us there never was (a) *γενναὶ ἀθεωτικαί*, a more Atheistical Generation of men, than at that time the leaders of the factions were; for they contemned the Laws of men and mocked at the Laws of God; (b) and denied the Prophetick Oracles as fabulous impostures: they would allow no difference of sacred and prophane, for they would drink the wine of the sacrifices promiscuously, and anoint their heads commonly

(a) L. 5. c. 16.

(b) L. 5. c. 2. P. 887.

commonly with the sacred oyl ; in a word they owned no distinction of good and evil, (a) but thought the greatest wickedness to be good to them. To say there is such a Generation of men among us, is to foretel our ruine more certainly than Comets and the most dreadful presages do : For this is a sort of madness which seldom seizes upon a people, but when they are past cure, and therefore are near their end.

4: Spiritual pride. This was very remarkable in *the people* of the Jews in a time when they had as little reason for it, as any people in the world. They still looked on themselves as God's chosen and peculiar People, his Darlings and his delight, and thought that God's honour and interest in the world were mightily concerned in their preservation. If they should be destroyed, they could not imagine what God would do for a people to serve him ; for all but themselves they looked on with a very scornful pity, and thought that God hated them because they did. They had the purity of his ordinances, in his house of prayer ; and the society of the faithful among themselves : whereas all others they thought, served God

only with their own inventions, or placed their Religion in dull morality. They were the people who maintained his cause, and ventured their lives and estates for it, and therefore God was bound in faithfulness to defend them, and he must deny himself if he did destroy them. It seems strange to us, that a people rejected by God for their horrible Hypocrisie, should claim such an interest in him, when they were marked out for destruction by him; but such is the bewitching nature of spiritual Pride and Hypocrisie, that it insinuates the minds of men to their ruin; and flatters them with their interest in the Promises, till God makes good his threatnings and destroys them. Never any people thought they had a richer stock of Promises to live on, than they; *ancient promises, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, full promises, of favour, protection, and deliverance from enemies; particular promises made to them and to no other people in the world.* Besides these, they had mighty *experiences* of God's kindness towards them, *undoubted experiences*, not depending on the deceitful workings of fancy; but seen in very strange and wonderful deliverances; *frequent*

quent experiences, throughout the whole History of their Nation : and *peculiar experiences* being such vouchsafements to them, which God communicated to none but his chosen people. Add to these, that they had at this time a wonderful zeal for the true worship of God as they thought ; they regarded no persecution or opposition, but thought it their glory and honour to sacrifice themselves for the cause of God and his people. And yet all this while, God was the greatest enemy they had ; and all their pretences signified nothing to him who saw their unsufferable pride and loathsome hypocrisie through those thin veils they had drawn over them, to deceive the less observing sort of men by. Other sins that are open and publick God preserves the Authority of his Laws by punishing of them, but these spiritual sins of pride and hypocrisie, he not only vindicates his Authority over the consciences of men, but the infiniteness of his wisdom and knowledge in their discovery, and his love to Integrity and inward holiness in the punishment of them. And therefore these sins are more especially odious to God as in-croaching upon his highest and most peculiar

culiar attributes ; thence he is said *to resist the proud*, as though he made an attempt upon God himself ; and he loaths the Hypocrite in heart, as one that mocks God as well as deceives men. The first tendency to the destruction of this Nation of the Jews was the prevalence of the Pharisaical temper among them, which was a compound of Pride and Hypocrisie ; and when the field was over-run with these tares, it was then time for God to put in his sickle and cut them down. God forbid, that our Church and the Protestant Religion in it should be in danger of destruction, for that would be a judgment beyond fire and sword and plague, and any thing we have yet smarted by ; that would be the taking away *the Kingdom of God from us*, and setting up the *Kingdom of darkness* ; that would be not only a punishment to our own Age, but the heaviest curse next to renouncing Christianity, we could entail upon posterity. But however though God in mercy may design better things for us, we cannot be sufficiently apprehensive of our danger, not so much from the business of our enemies, as those bad Symtoms we find among our selves. When there is such
mon-

monstrous pride and ingratitude among many who pretend to a purer worship of God than is established by Law, as though there were little or no difference between the Government of *Moses* and *Aaron* and the bondage of *Egypt*. O *England, England*, what will the Pride and unthankfulness of those who profess Religion bring thee to! Will men still prefer their own reputation, or the interest of a small party of Zealots, before the common concerns of our Faith and Religion? *O that we did know at least in this our day, the things that belong to our peace!* but let it never be said, *That they are hid from our eyes.* But if our common enemy should enter in at the breaches we have made among ourselves, then men may wish they had sooner known the difference between the reasonable commands of our own Church, and the intolerable Tyranny of a foreign and usurped power: between the soft and gentle hands of a Mother, and the Iron sinews of an Executioner; between the utmost rigour of our Laws, and the least of an inquisition. If ingratitude were all, yet that were a sin high enough to provoke God to make our condition worse than it is, but to what

a strange height of spiritual pride are those arrived, who ingross all true godliness to themselves? as though it were not possible among us to go to Heaven and to Church together. As though Christ had no Church for 1500 years and more, wherein not one person can be named who thought it unlawful to pray by a prescribed form. As though men could not love God and pray sincerely to him, that valued the peace and order of the Church above the heats and conceptions of their own brains. Where differences proceed meerly from ignorance and weakness, they are less dangerous to themselves or others: but where there is so much impatience of reproof, such contempt of superiours, such uncharitable censures of other men, such invincible prejudices and stiffness of humour, such scorn and reproach cast upon the publick worship among us; What can such things spring from but a root of bitterness and spiritual pride? I speak not these things to widen our differences, or increase our animosities, they are too large and too great already, nor to condemn any humble and modest dissenters from us; but I despair ever to see our divisions healed,
till

till Religion be brought from the fancies to the hearts of men ; and till men instead of mystical notions and unaccountable experiences , instead of misapplying promises and mis-understanding the spirit of prayer, instead of judging of themselves by mistaken signs of Grace , set themselves to the practice of humility, self-denial, meekness, patience, charity, obedience and a holy life, and look on these as the greatest duties and most distinguishing characters of true Christianity. And in doing of these there shall not only be a great reward in the life to come ; but in spite of all opposition from Atheism, Profaneness, or Superstition, we may see our divisions cured, and the Kingdom of God, which is a Kingdom of peace and holiness, to abide and flourish among us.

SER-

SERMON IX.

Preached at

WHITE-HALL.

WHITSUNDAY 1669.

JOHN VII. 39.

But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.

WHat was said of old concerning the first Creation of the World, that in order to the accomplishment of it (a) *the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters,* is in a sense agreeable to the nature of it as true of the renovation of the World by the doctrine of Christ. For whether by that we understand a great and veho

ment ^wind, as the Jews generally do; or rather the Divine power manifesting it self in giving motion to the otherwise dull and unactive parts of matter; we have it fully represented to us in the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost: For that

(a) A^ct. 2. 2. came upon them, (a) *as a rushing mighty Wind*, and inspired them with a new life and motion, whereby they became the most active instruments of bringing the World out of that state of confusion and darkness it lay in before, by causing the glorious light of the Gospel to shine upon it. And lest any part should be wanting to make up the parallel, in the verse before the text, we read of the *Waters* too which the Spirit of God did move upon, and therefore called not a dark Abyss, but flowing rivers of living water.

(b) V. 38. (b) *He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water*: Not as though the Apostles like some in the ancient Fables were to be turned into Fountains and pleasant Springs; but the great and constant benefit which the Church of God enjoys by the plentiful effusion of the Holy Spirit upon them, could not be better set forth than by rivers of living water

water flowing from them. And this the Evangelist in these words, to prevent all cavils and mistakes, tells us was our Saviour's meaning ; *But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive.* And lest any should think that our Blessed Saviour purposely affected to speak in strange metaphors, we shall find a very just occasion given him for using this way of expression from a custom practised among the Jews at that time. For in the solemnity of the feast of Tabernacles, especially in the last and great day of the Feast mentioned v. 37. after the Sacrifices were offered upon the Altar, one of the Priests was to go with a large Golden Tankard to the Fountain of *Siloam*, and having filled it with water, he brings it up to the water-gate over against the Altar, where it was received with a great deal of pomp and ceremony, with the sounding of the Trumpets and rejoycing of the People, which continued during the libation or pouring it out before the Altar ; after which followed the highest expressions of joy that were ever used among that people ; insomuch that they have a saying among them, *That he that never saw the rejoycing of the drawing of water, ne-*

L' Empe-
rur in
Middoth.
p. 67.
Buxtorf.
Lex. Rabb.
ו. באש
Hackspan.
disp. Phi-
lolog p. 488.
Tremel. in
not. ad Syr.
N.

(a) v. Bux-
torf.
(b) Esai.
12. 3.

ver saw rejoycing in all his life. Of which several accounts are given by the Jews, some say it had a respect to the later rain which God gave them about this time, others to the keeping of the Law ; but that which is most to our purpose is, that the reason assigned by one of the Rabbies in the *Jerusalem* (a) *Talmud* is, (b) *because of the drawing or pouring out of the Holy Ghost according to what is said, with joy shall ye draw water out of the Wells of Salvation.* By which we see that no fairer advantage could be given to our Saviour to discourse concerning the effusion of the Holy Ghost, and the mighty joy which should be in the Christian Church by reason of that, than in the time of this solemnity ; and so lets them know that the Holy Ghost represented by their pouring out of water was not to be expected by their rites and ceremonies, but by believing the doctrine which he preached : and that this should not be in so scant and narrow a measure as that which was taken out of *Siloam*, which was soon poured out and carried away but out of them on whom the Holy Ghost should come, *rivers of living waters should flow* ; whose effect and benefit should never cease as long as the World

World it self should continue. So that in the words of the Text we have these particulars offered to our consideration.

1. The effusion of the Spirit under the times of the Gospel: *But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive.*

2. The nature of that effusion represented to us by *rivers of living waters flowing out of them.*

3. The time that was reserved for it; which was after the glorious ascension of Christ to Heaven: *For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.*

1. The effusion of the Spirit under the times of the Gospel; by which we mean those extraordinary gifts and abilities which the Apostles had after the Holy Ghost is said to descend upon them.

Which are therefore called (a) *signs and wonders, and divers gifts of the Holy* (a) Heb. 2. 4.

Ghost: (b) and the operations of the Spi- (b) 1 Cor. 12. 6. 11.
rit; of which we have a large enumeration given us in that place.

The two most remarkable which I shall insist upon and do comprehend under them most of the rest, are, *the power of working Miracles*; whether in Healing

diseases or any other way ; *and the gift of tongues* either in speaking or interpreting ; they who will acknowledge that the Apostles had these, will not have reason to question any of the rest. And concerning these I shall endeavour to prove,

1. That the things attributed to the Apostles concerning them, could not arise from any ordinary, or natural causes.

2. That they could not be the effects of an evil, but of a holy and divine spirit ; and therefore that there was really *such a pouring out of the spirit* as is here mentioned.

1. That the things attributed to the Apostles could not arise from any merely natural causes. It is not my present business to prove the truth of the matters of fact, *viz.* that the Apostles did those things which were accounted Miracles by those who saw them or heard of them ; and that on the day of Pentecost they did speak with strange tongues ; for these things are so universally attested by the most competent witnesses, *viz.* persons of the same age, whose testimony we can have no reason to suspect ; and not only by those who

were

were the friends to this Religion, but the greatest enemies Jews and Heathens; and by all the utmost endeavours of Atheistical men, who have not set themselves to disprove the testimony, but the consequence of it, (by saying that granting them true they do not infer the concurrence of a divine spirit) that on the same grounds any person would question the truth of these things, he must question the truth of some other things, which himself believes on the same or weaker grounds than these are. Supposing then the matters of fact to be true, we now enquire whether these things might proceed from any meerly natural causes, which will be the best done by examining the most plausible accounts which are pretended to be given of them. And thus some have had the confidence to say, *That whatever is said to be done by the power of miracles in the Apostles might be effected by a natural temperament of body, or the great power of imagination; and that their speaking with strange tongues might be the effect only of a natural Enthusiasm, or some distemper of brain.*

1. That the power of miracles might be nothing but a natural temperament or the strength of imagination.

1. An excellent natural temper of body they say may do strange and wonderful things, so that such a one who hath an exact temperament may walk upon the waters, stand in the air, and quench the violence of the fire; and by a strange kind of sanative contagion may communicate healthful spirits, as persons that are infected do noisom and pestilential. These are things spoken with as much ease and as little reason, as any of the calumnies against Religion, which are so boldly uttered by men who dare speak any thing as to these things but reason, and do any thing but what is good.

But can these men after all their confidence produce any one person in the World, who by the exquisite of his natural temper hath ever walked upon the waters, or poised himself in the air, or kept himself from being singed in the fire? If these things be natural, how comes it to pass that no other instances can be given but such as we urge for miraculous? We say indeed that (a) *Christ walked on the Sea*, but withal we say this was

(a) Matth.
14. 29.

was an argument of that divine power in him; which, as Job saith, (a) *alone* ^{(a) Job 9. 8.} *spreadeth out the heavens and treadeth upon the waves of the Sea*: We say that (b) *Elijah was carried up into Heaven by a Chariot of fire and a whirlwind*; but it ^{(b) 2 Kings 2. 11.} was only by his power, (c) *who maketh the winds his Messengers, and flames of fire his Ministers*, ^{(c) Psal. 104. 4.} as some render those words of the Psalmist: We say that the three Children were preserved (d) *in the fiery furnace*, ^{(d) Dan. 3. 25, 26.} that they had no hurt; and even Nebuchadnezzar was hereby convinced, that he was the *true God*, which was able to preserve his servants from the force of that devouring element which was therefore so much worshipped by those Eastern people, because it destroyed not only the men but the Gods of other nations. But is this enough to satisfy any reasonable men that these things were done by natural causes; because they were done at all? For that is to suppose it impossible there should be miracles; which is to say it is impossible there should be a God; which is an attempt somewhat beyond what the most impudent Atheists pretended. But in this case nothing can be reasonably urged but *common experience* to the contrary;

trary; if these were things which were usually done by other causes, there would be no reason to pretend a miraculous power: but we say it is impossible that such things should be produced by mere natural causes, and in this case there can be no confutation but by contrary experience. As we see the opinion of the Ancients concerning the uninhabitable-ness of the torrid Zone; and that there were no Antipodes; are disproved by the manifest experience to the contrary of all modern discoverers. Let such plain experience be produced, and we shall then yield the possibility of the things by some natural causes, although not by such an *exact temperament of body*, which is only an instance of the strong power of imagination in those who think so whatever that may have on others. Such a temperament of body as these persons imagine, considering the great inequality of the mixture of the earthly and aerial parts in us, being it may be as great a miracle it self, as any they would disprove by it.

2. But supposing such a temperament of body to be possible, how comes it to be so beneficial to others, as to propagate its vertue to the cure of diseased persons

persons? We may as well think that a great beauty may change a Black by often viewing him, or a skilful Musician make another so by sitting near him, as one man heal another because he is healthful himself. Unless we can suppose it in the power of a man to send forth the best spirits of his own body and transfuse them into the body of another; but by this means that which must cure another must destroy himself. Besides the healthfulness of a person lies much in the freedom of perspiration of all the noxious vapours to the body; by which it will appear incredible that a man should preserve his own health by sending out the worst vapors, and at the same time cure another, by sending out the best.

3. Supposing we should grant that a vigorous heat and a strong arm may by a violent friction disperse some tumor of a distempered body; yet what would all this signify to the mighty cures which were wrought so easily and with a word speaking and at such great distance as were by Christ and his Apostles? Supposing our Saviour had the most exact natural temper that ever any person in the world had; yet what could this do
to

to the cure of a person above twenty miles distance? for so our Saviour cured the Son of a Nobleman who lay sick at (a) *Capernaum*, when himself was at (a) *Cana* in *Galilee*? So at (b) *Capernaum* he cured the Centurion's servant at his own house without going thither. Thus we find the Apostles curing, though (c) *they did not touch them*; and that not one or two but multitudes of diseased persons. And nothing can be more absurd than to imagine that so many men should at the same time work so many miraculous cures by vertue of a temperament peculiar to themselves? for how come they only to happen to have this temperament and none of the Jews who had all equal advantages with them for it? Why did none of the enemies of Christ do as strange things as they did? How come they never to do it before they were *Christians*, nor in such an extraordinary manner till after the day of Pentecost? Did the being Christians alter their natural temper and infuse a *sanative* vertue into them which they never had before? Or rather was not their Christianity like to have spoyled it if ever they had it before; by their frequent watchings, fastings, hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, stripes

stripes and imprisonments, racks and torments? Are these the improvers of an excellent constitution? if they be, I doubt not but those who magnifie it in them, would rather want the vertue of it, than be at the pains to obtain it.

2. But what a natural temper cannot do, they think *the power of imagination* may: and therefore in order to the enervating the power of miracles, they mightily advance that of imagination: which is the *Idol* of those who are as little Friends to reason in it as they are to Religion. Any thing shall be able to effect that, which they will not allow God to do: nay the most extravagant thing which belongs to humane nature shall have a greater power than the most holy and divine spirit. *But do not we see, say they, strange effects of the power of imagination upon mankind? I grant we do, and in nothing more than when men set it up against the power of God: yet surely we see far greater effects of that in the world than we do of the other.* The power of imagination can never be supposed to give a being to the things we see in the world? but we have the greatest reason to attribute that to a
divine

divine and infinite power ; and is it not far more rational that that which gave a Being to the course of nature should alter it when it pleaseth, than that which had nothing to do in the making of it : So that in general, there can be no competition between the power of God and the strength of imagination as to any extraordinary effects which happen in the world. But this is not all ; for there is a repugnancy in the very nature of the thing that the power of imagination should do all those miracles which were wrought by Christ or his Apostles. For either they must be wrought by the imagination of the Agent or of the Patient : if of the Agent, then there can be no more necessary to do the same things than to have the same strength of imagination which they had ; what is the reason then that never since or before that time were so many signs, and wonders wrought as there were then by the Apostles and Disciples of our Lord ? If *Peter* and *John* cured the lame man by the strength of imagination ; why have no persons ever since cured those whose welfare they have as heartily desired as ever they could do his ? Certainly if imagination could kill mens enemies, there

there would never need *Duels* to destroy them, nor Authority to punish such as do it : and if it could cure Friends, there would need no Physicians to heal and recover them, and death would have nothing to do, but with persons that were wholly Friendless. If they say, *that persons are not sufficiently perswaded of their own power, and therefore they do see little good* ; let any of those who contend the most for it attempt the cure when they please of any the most common infirmity of mankind ; and if they cannot do that, let them then perswade us they can do miracles by that, which they cannot cure the tooth-ach by. But here they will say, *the imagination of the Patient is necessary in order to a miracle being wrought upon him* : not such I am sure as Christ and his Apostles wrought, who not only healed the lame and the blind, but *raised the dead* ; and what power of imagination do they suppose in *Lazarus* when he had lain four days in the Grave ? and however they think of the soul they must in this case allow this power of imagination to be *immortal*. So that were there no other arguments but that of raising the dead that demonstrates it impossible that what Christ or his Apostles

stles did, did depend on the strength of Fancy in those on whom they wrought their miracles.

Object. But, say they, *did not Christ and his Apostles require believing first in all persons that had miracles wrought upon them; and why should this be, but because the strength of imagination was required to it?* And is it not expressly said, that Christ could not do any mighty works among his own country-men because of their unbelief? by which it appears that the efficacy of his miracles did depend on the Faith of the Persons. To which I answer,

Ans. 1. That Christ did not always require faith in the person on whom he wrought his miracles; for then it had been impossible he should ever have raised any from the dead: which we are sure he did. And did not (a) St. Paul raise Eutychius from the dead? and can any think so absurdly as that faith was required from a dead man in order to his resurrection? So that the greatest miracles of all others were wrought, where there was no possibility of believing in those on whom they were wrought.

2. When in miraculous cures believing was required, it was to shew for what end those miracles were wrought, viz. to

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(a) Act.
10. 9, 12.

from the Doctrine of the Gospel by them: they did not work miracles to be admired by the people as *Simon Magus* would have done; the Apostles had no such intolerable vanity to be cried up for Gods, though they did such great things; not like that *Cæsar* of the *Atheists* as some call him, who concludes one of his (a) *(a) Dialog. Dialogues* with that horrible piece of vanity (to say no more of it) *aut Deus es aut Vaninus*, and *Pomponatius* his Master before him had said (b) *Philosophi sunt* (b) *Pomponat. de Incantat. c. 4. p. 53.* *Dii terrestres*, (and you must be sure to reckon him in the number;) but how was it possible for these men to discover more their mean thoughts of a Deity than by making him to be as despicable as themselves? What boasting and ostentation would these men have made of themselves, if they could have done but the thousand part of what the Apostles did? But they were men did as far exceed all such in all true virtue and real excellency as they did in that miraculous power which God had given them. If they required men to believe whom they cured, it was that they might cure both body and soul together: but sometimes they cured persons whom they saw not: as the (c) *handkerchiefs* from *St. Paul* at (c) *Acts 19. 11, 12.*

Ephesus cured the diseased when they were carried to them. But generally they took all opportunities to convey the Doctrine of Christianity into the minds of those, out of whose bodies they cast either Diseases or Devils. But is it not said that Christ could do no mighty works among them because of their unbelief, and the power of his disciples could not be greater than his own? To which I answer,

1. It is no-where said in the Scripture that Christ could do no miracles at all among them because of their unbelief: for in one place it is said, (a) *And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.* He did miracles enough to convince them; but when he saw their obstinacy, he would not cast away any more upon them. And in that other place where it is said, (b) *that he could there do no mighty work,* it is presently added, *save that he laid his hands upon few sick folk and healed them.* And what absurdity is there that Christ should do no extraordinary miracle among them, among whom he saw that himself and his miracles were both equally contained. It is not the method of divine goodness to bestow the largest kindness

(a) Mark
13. 58.

(b) Matth.
6. 5.

at first; those who improve the beginnings of favour shall have more, but those who despise the first may justly be rejected from any farther kindness.

2. When it is said *that he could not*, that expression doth not imply any impossibility in the thing but a deliberate resolution to the contrary, so it is used Acts 4. 20. *For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.* Who questions but there was a possibility in the thing, that they might have held their peace? but it was a thing which upon great deliberation they had resolved not to do. So (a) *thou canst not* ^{(a) Revel.} *hear them which are evil*; and (b) *we can* ^{2. 2.} *do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.* ^{(b) 2 Cor.} ^{13. 8.} From which it appears that this can be no prejudice to the power of Christ in working miracles, but only shews his just resolution not to do it, considering the contempt wherewith he had been entertained among them.

3. It is pretended by those men who set themselves to undervalue those miraculous gifts which the Apostles had, *that the gift of tongues might be only the effect of an Enthusiastick heat, or some distemper of their brains, as men in a high Fever are apt to speak such things and words, which*

while they are in health they could never do. But that such unreasonable imaginations do more argue a distempered brain, than any thing we assert concerning these divine persons will easily appear from these considerations.

1. That no violent heat whatsoever can form a new language to a man which he never knew before. If language had been natural to man, there might have been some reason for it; but that we all know to be an arbitrary thing: and as well might a blind man paint with an exact difference of colours, or one write plainly who could never read, as any person by the meer heat of his Phancy speak suddenly in a tongue which he never learnt. There have been some who have said (a) that the mind of man hath naturally all kinds of languages within it self, and it wants nothing but some mighty heat to stir men up to speak in any kind of them. But we are to take notice that those things are accounted wit when spoken against Religion, which would have been nonsense and contradictions if spoken for it. And certainly nothing could be more absurdly said, than for the same men to make all the imaginations we have of things to come in by our senses

(a) Vanin.
Dial. 54.
p. 407.

and yet to say that the mind of man can have those things in it, which he never learnt or heard. If this supposition were true, we might invert that saying of (a) *Festus* to *St. Paul*, *Much learning hath made thee mad*; for then *madness*, or that which is the next to it, *a great heat of brain*, would make men the most learned. If this were true, there would be a much easier way of attaining to speak in the languages of all nations than that which many take to gain a very few of them: for the heightening of Phancy either by Wine, or a degree of madness would inspire men with skill in tongues to a miracle.

2. But supposing such a thing possible, which is far from being so, yet it is very remote from our present case; for the Apostles made it manifest to all persons that they were far enough from being inspired with the vapours of wine, or touched with any Enthusiastick madness. They spake with strange tongues, but in such a manner as convinced great numbers of their hearers of the excellency of that doctrine which was delivered by them. As *St. Paul* answered *Festus*, (b) *I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth*.

- and soberness; so they did not speak incoherent and insignificant words which madness makes men do, nor any mean and trivial things, meerly for ostentation of their gifts, but they spake though with divers tongues, (a) *the great or wonderful things of God*: So their Auditors confessed with admiration. These are not the effects of Wine or Madness, as St. Peter at large proves, against the unreasonable cavils of some (b) *who mocked and said they were full of new wine*. Which he doth with so great success, that the same day 3000 persons disowned their former course of life and embraced Christianity. Surely, madness was never more infectious, never made men more wise and sober, than this did, if the Apostles were acted only by that. When was there ever better and more weighty sense spoken by any, than by the Apostles after the day of *Pentecost*? With what reason do they argue, with what strength do they discourse, with what a sedate and manly courage do they withstand the opposition of the *Sanhedrin* against them? they never fly out into any extravagant passion, never betray any weakness or fear: but speak the truth with boldness, and rejoyce when they

suffer

suffer for it. It could be no sudden heat which acted them on the day of Pentecost, for the same Spirit and power continued with them afterwards: they lived and acted by vertue of it, so that their life was as great a miracle, as any that was wrought by them. Their zeal was great but regular, their devotion fervent and constant, their conversation honest and prudent, their discourses inflaming and convincing, and the whole course of their lives breathed nothing but glory to God, and good-will towards Men. If they are called to suffer for their Religion, with what constancy do they own the truth, with what submission do they yield to their persecutors, with what meekness and patience do they bear their sufferings! If differences arise among Christians, with what care do they advise, with what caution do they direct, with what gentleness do they instruct, with what tenderness do they bear with dissenters, with what earnestness do they endeavour to preserve the peace of the Christian Church! When they are to plant Churches, how ready to go about it, how diligent in attending it, how watchful to prevent all miscarriages among them! When they write Epistles

to those already planted, with what Authority do they teach, with what Majesty do they command, with what severity do they rebuke, with what pity do they chastise, with what vehemency do they exhort, and with what weighty arguments do they perswade all Christians to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things! So that such persons who after all these things can believe that the Apostles were acted only by some extravagant heats, may as easily perswade themselves that men may be drunk with sobriety, and mad with reason, and debauched with goodness. But such are fit only to be treated in a dark room, if any can be found darker than their understandings are.

2. But yet there may be imagined a higher sort of madness than these men are guilty of, *viz.* That when men are convinced that these things could not be done by meer Mechanical causes, then they attribute them to the assistance of Spirits, but not to the holy and divine, but such as are evil and impure. A madness so great and extravagant, that we could hardly imagine that it were incident to humane nature, unless the Scripture had told us that some had thus blasphemed

phemed the son of man, and either had or were in danger of blaspheming the *Holy Ghost* too. And this is properly *blaspheming the Holy Ghost*, (which was not given, as our text tells us, till after Christ's ascension) when men attribute all those miraculous gifts which were poured out upon the Apostles in confirmation of the Christian doctrine to the power of an unclean Spirit. For so the Evangelist St. Luke, when he mentions the (a) *blasphemy against the Holy Ghost* (a) Luk. 12. 10. which shall not be forgiven, immediately subjoins, *their bringing in the Apostles to the Synagogues and Magistrates and Powers*; and adds, *that the Holy Ghost*, (even that which they so blasphemed in them) *should teach them in that same hour what they ought to say*. I deny not but the attributing the miraculous works of Christ, who had the Holy Spirit without measure, to an evil Spirit was the same kind of sin; but it received a greater aggravation after the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and the miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles. For now the great confirmation was given to the truth of all that Christ had said before; he had sometimes concealed his miracles and forbid the

the publishing of them : and to such he appeared but as the son of man, of whom
 (a) 1 Cor. it is said (a) *that had they known him*
 2. 8. *they would not have crucified the Lord of*
 (b) Act. 3. *Glory : and St. Peter more expressly ; (b)*
 17. *and now Brethren I wrote that through ig-*
norance you did it as did also your Rulers.
 But now since his resurrection and ascen-
 sion, when God by the effusion of the
 Holy Ghost hath given the largest and
 fullest Testimony to the doctrine of the
 Gospel ; if men after all this shall go on
to blaspheme the Holy Ghost, by attribu-
 ting all these miracles to a Diabolical
 power, then there is no forgiveness to be
 expected either in this world, or the
 world to come ; because this argues the
 greatest obstinacy of mind, the highest
 contempt of God, and the greatest af-
 front that can be put upon the Testimo-
 ny of the Holy Spirit ; for it is charging
 the Spirit of truth to be an evil and a ly-
 ing Spirit. By which we see what great
 weight and moment the Scripture lays
 upon this pouring out of the Holy Ghost
 on the Apostles, and what care men ought
 to have how they undervalue and despise
 it, and much more how they do reproach
 and blaspheme it. They might as well
 imagine that light and darkness may meet
 and

and embrace each other, as that the infernal Spirits should imploy their power in promoting a doctrine so contrary to their interest? For Heaven and Hell cannot be more distant, than the whole design of Christianity is from all the contrivances of wicked Spirits. How soon was the Devil's Kingdom broken, his Temples demolished, his Oracles silenced, himself baffled in his great design of deceiving mankind when Christianity prevailed in the world? Having thus far asserted the truth of the thing, viz. that there was such an effusion of the Holy Spirit, we now come to consider,

2. The nature of it as it is represented to us by *Rivers of living waters flowing out of them that believe*; by which we may understand

1. The plenty of it, called *Rivers of waters*.
2. The benefit and usefulness of it to the Church.

1. The plentifulness of this effusion of the Spirit; there had been some drops, as it were, of this Spirit which had fallen upon some of the Jewish nation before; but those were no more to be compared with these *Rivers of waters*, than the waters of *Siloam* which run softly, with

- with the mighty River *Euphrates*. What was the *Spirit* which *Bezaleel* had to
- (a) Exod. 31. 3. build the (a) Tabernacle with, if compared with that Spirit which the Apostles were inspired with for *building up* the Church of God? What was that (b) *Spirit* of *Wisdom* which some were filled with to make garments for *Aaron*, if compared with that Spirit of *Wisdom* and *Revelation* which led the Apostles into the knowledge of all Truth? What was that *Spirit* of *Courage* which was given to the *Judges* of old, if compared with that *Spirit* which did *convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment*? What was that *Spirit* of *Moses* which was communicated to the 70 Elders, if compared with that Spirit of his Son, which God hath shed abroad in the hearts of his people? What was that *Spirit* of *Prophecy*, which inspired some *Prophets*
- (c) Act. 2. 16, 17. in several Ages, with that (c) *pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh*; which the Apostle tells us was accomplished on the day of *Pentecost*? But these *Rivers of Waters*, though they began their course at *Jerusalem* upon that day, yet they soon overflowed the Christian Church in other parts of the world. The sound of that rushing mighty Wind was soon heard

heard in the most distant places: and the fiery tongues inflamed the hearts of many who never saw them. These gifts being propagated into other Churches, and many other tongues were kindled from them, as we see how much this gift of tongues obtained in the Church of *Corinth*: And so in the History of the Acts of the Apostles, we find after this day how the Holy Ghost fell upon them which believed, and what mighty signs and wonders were done by them.

2. The benefit and usefulness of this effusion of the Spirit; like *the Rivers of Waters* that both refresh and enrich, and thereby make glad the City of God. The coming down of the Spirit was like (a) *the pouring water upon him that is* (a) Isa. 44. thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: 3.

Now (b) *God opened the Rivers in high* (b) Isa. 41. places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; that the poor and needy who seek water might be refreshed, and they whose tongues failed for thirst might satisfy themselves with living water. These are some of the lofty expressions whereby the *Courtly Prophet Isaiah* sets forth the great promise of the Spirit; none better bestitting the mighty advantages the Church of God hath ever since enjoyed by

by the pouring out of the spirit than these. For the fountain was opened in the Apostles, but the streams of those Rivers of living water have run down to our Age: not confined within the banks of *Tiber*, nor mixing with the impure waters of it; but preserved pure and unmixed in that sacred doctrine contained in the Holy Scripture. Within those bounds we confine our faith, and are not moved by the vain discourses of any who pretend to discover a new Fountain-head to these waters at *Rome*; and would make it impossible for them to come down to us through any other Channel but theirs. But supposing they had come to us through them, have they thereby gotten the sole disposal of them, that none shall tast but what and how much they please? and must we needs drink down the filth and mud of their Channel too? As long as they suffer us to do what Christ hath commanded us to do, viz.

(a) John 7. (a) to take of these waters of life freely
 37. we do our own duty and quarrel not
 Revel. 22. with them. But if they go about to stop
 17. the passage of them, or adulterate them with some forrain mixture, or strive with us as the Herdsmen of *Gerar* did with

(b) Gen. 26. *Isaac's Herdsmen* saying the (b) *Water* is
 20.

ours, then if the name of the Well be *Esek*, if contentions do arise, the blame is not ours; we assert but our own just right against all their encroachments. For as *Isaac* pleaded (a) *that he only digged again* (a) V. 18. *the wells of water which they had digged in the days of Abraham his Father*; and although *the Philistins* had stopped them after the death of *Abraham*, yet that could be no hindrance to his right, but he might open them again, and call their names after the names by which his Father had called them: So that is the substance of our Plea, we pretend to nothing but to clear the passage which they have stopped up, and was left free and open for us in the time of the Apostles and Fathers; we desire not to be imposed upon by their later usurpations: we plead for no more but that the Church of God may have the same purity and integrity which it had in the primitive times, and that things may not only be called by the names by which the Fathers have called them; but that they may be such as the Fathers have left them. But otherwise let them boast never so much of the largeness of their Stream, of the Antiquity of their Channel, of the holiness of their Waters, of the number of their Ports,

Ports, and the riches of their Trading; nay and let them call their stream by the name of the *Ocean* too (if they please,) yet we envy them not their *Admah* and *Pharpar* and all the Rivers of *Damascus*, so we may sit down quietly by these living waters of *Jordan*. We are contented with the miracles which the Apostles wrought without forging or believing new ones; we are satisfied with the gift of strange tongues which they had; we know no necessity now of *speaking* much less of *praying* in an *unknown tongue*: we believe that Spirit infallible which inspired the Apostles in their holy Writings; and those we acknowledge, embrace, and I hope are willing to die for: But if any upstart Spirit pretend to sit in an infallible Chair, we desire not to be brought under bondage to it, till we see the same miracles wrought by vertue of it, which were wrought by the Apostles to attest their infallibility.

3. The last thing to be spoken to, is *the season* that this effusion of the Spirit was reserved for, which was after the glorious ascension of Christ to Heaven. This was reserved as the great *Donative* after his Triumph over Principalities and Powers; when he was ascended up on high,

he sends down the greatest gift that ever was bestowed upon mankind, viz. this gift of his Holy Spirit. Hereby Christ discovered the greatness of his Purchase, the height of his Glory, the exercise of his Power, the assurance of his Resurrection and Ascension: and the care he took of his Church and People; by letting them see that he made good his last promise to them of sending them another Comforter who should be with them to assist them in all their undertakings, to direct them in their doubts, to plead their cause for them against all the vain oppositions of men. And he should not continue with them for a little time as Christ had done, but he should abide with them for ever, i.e. so as not to be taken from them as himself was, but should remain with them, as a pledge of his love, as a testimony of his truth, as an earnest of God's favour to them now, and their future inheritance in heaven; for he should comfort them by his presence, guide them by his counsel, and at last bring them to glory.

Nothing now remains but that as the occasion of our rejoycing on this day doth so much exceed that of the Jews at their ceremony of *pouring out the water*;

(a) 1 Cor.
10. 4.

so our joy should as much exceed in the nature and kind of it the mirth and jollity which was then used by them. With what joy did the *Israelites* when they were almost burnt up with thirst in the Wilderness tast of the pleasant streams which issued out of the rock? (a) *that rock*, saith the Apostle, *was Christ*, and the gifts of the Spirit are that stream of living water which flows from him, and shall not we express our thankfulness for so great and unvaluable a mercy? Our joy cannot be too great for such a gift as this so it be of the nature of it, *i. e.* a spiritual joy. The Holy Ghost ought to be the Fountain of that joy which we express for God's giving him to his Church. Let us not then affront that good Spirit, while we pretend to bless God for him; let us not grieve him by our presumptuous sins, nor resist his motions in our hearts by our wilful continuance in them. The best way we can express our thankfulness is by yielding up our selves to be guided by him in a holy life, and then we may be sure our joy shall never end with our lives, but shall be continued with a greater fulness for ever more.

SERMON X.

Preached at

WHITE-HALL.

MARCH 2. 1669.

ISAIAH LVII. 21.

*There is no peace, saith my God, to
the Wicked.*

IF we were bound to judge of things
only by appearance, and to esteem all
persons happy who are made the ob-
ject of the envy of some and the flattery
of others, this text would seem to be a
strange Paradox, and inconsistent with
what daily happens in the world. For
what complaint hath been more frequent
among men almost in all Ages, than that
peace and prosperity hath been the
portion of the wicked, that their troubles
have not been like other mens, that none

seem to enjoy greater pleasures in this world than they who live as if there were no other? The consideration of which hath been a matter of great offence to the weak, and of surprise to the wisest; till they have searched more deeply into the nature of these things (which the more men have done the better esteem they have always had of divine providence) and from thence have understood that the true felicity of a man's life lies in the contentment of his own mind, which can never arise from any thing without himself, nor be enjoyed till all be well within. For when we compare the state of humane nature with that of the beings inferiour to it, we shall easily find that as man was designed for a greater happiness than they are capable of; so that cannot lie in any thing which he enjoys in common with them, (such as the pleasures of our senses are) but must consist in some peculiar excellencies of his being. And as the capacity of misery is always proportionable to that of happiness; so the measure and the kind of that must be taken in the same manner that we do the other. Where there is no sense of pleasure, there can be none of pain; where all pleasure is confined

to sense, the pain must be so too; but where the greatest pleasures are intellectual, the greatest torments must be those of the mind. From whence it follows that nothing doth so much conduce to the proper happiness of man, as that which doth the most promote the peace and serenity of his mind: nothing can make him more miserable than that which causeth the greatest disturbance in it. If we can then make it appear that the highest honours, the greatest riches, and the softest pleasures can never satisfy the desires, conquer the fears, nor allay the passions of an ungoverned mind, we must search beyond these things for the foundations of its peace. And if notwithstanding them there may be such a sting in the conscience of a wicked man, that may inflame his mind to so great a height of rage and fury, which the diversions of the World cannot prevent, nor all its pleasures cure: we are especially concerned to fix such a notion of man's happiness, which either supposes a sound mind or else makes it so; without which all the other things so much admired can no more contribute towards any true contentment than a magnificent Palace, or a curiously wrought

bed to the cure of the Gout or Stoe. All which I speak, (not as though I imagined any state of perfect tranquility or compleat happiness were attainable by any man in this present life: for as long as the causes are imperfect, the effect must be so too: and those Philosophers who discoursed so much of a happy state of life, did but frame *Ideas* in *Morals* as they did in *Politicks*, not as though it were possible for any to reach to the exactness of them, but those were to be accounted best which came the nearest to them:) but I therefore speak concerning a happy state of life for these two reasons.

1. That though none can be perfectly happy, yet that some may be much more so than others are, *i. e.* they may enjoy far greater contentment of mind in any condition than others can do, they can bear crosses, and suffer injuries with a more equal temper; and when they meet with vicissitudes in the world they wonder no more at it, than to see that the Wind changes its quarter, or that the Sea proves rough and tempestuous which but a little before was very even and calm. They who understand humane nature, have few things left to wonder

wonder at ; and they who do the least wonder, are the least surpris'd ; and they who are the least surpris'd, are the least troubled ; and those are the happiest men as this world goes, who meet with fewest troubles in it. The *Italians* have a shrewd Proverb, that there is less money, less wisdom, less honesty in the world than men generally make account of ; I will not stand to maintain the truth of it, but the less men believe of these things, the less they are deceived, and the less they are deceived the less they are troubled. For no troubles are greater than those which are the most unexpected ; none are so unexpected as those which come upon men who are only undeceived by their own experience : For they undergo a great deal of trouble to gain a little wisdom, whereas a true judgment and consideration of these things beforehand, keeps the mind of man more steady and fixt amidst all the contingencies of humane affairs. By which we see that wisdom of it self hath a great influence upon the quiet and peace of man's mind, and the happiness of his life : But if we add to that the inseparable property of true wisdom, *viz.* patience and submission to the Will of God upon the confi-

deration of his infinite Wisdom and Goodness, he must be strangely blind that cannot discern a greater peace and serenity following these two in the minds of men, than where folly and irreligion reign. Thus far then we have gained, that Wisdom and Piety tend very much to the lessening the troubles of a man's life; and therein lies the far greatest part of the happiness of this imperfect State. For it is a vain thing to expect in so open a condition as we live in here, that no cross Winds should blow upon us; but if they only shake our branches and make our leaves fall, as long as the root holds firm and the body entire, the former beauty and glory will return again. It can be no disparagement to the most skilful Pilot, to have his Vessel tossed upon a tempestuous Sea, but to escape with little damage when he sees others sink down and perish, shews the great difference which wisdom gives in the success, where the dangers are equal and common. So that not only some men may meet with fewer troubles in the world than others do; but supposing they meet with the same, some are far more happy in passing through them than others are. And this is the fairest sense I know can be gi-

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ven of those otherwise extravagant speeches of the Philosophers of old, concerning *the Wise man being happy in the Bull of Phalaris, or under the greatest racks and torments*; not as though they could be so senseless to imagine that any man could be as happy in his torments as out of them; but that taking him in the same State with another man who wants that constancy of mind which he hath, he may be said to be happy in respect of the other. By which we see, that although no state of life can be said to be completely happy, yet some may be much nearer than others can be. Which was necessary to be premised in order to the right understanding the design of our following discourse: which is to shew,

2. That some course of life to any man who considers what he doth, is utterly inconsistent with a state of Peace and Tranquility; I mean the course of Sin and Wickedness. So the Prophet assures us from the mouth of God himself in the words of the text. *There is no peace, saith my God, to the Wicked.* Which words are spoken on purpose by the Prophet, to shew how much the wickedness of men doth hinder them from enjoying that peace and happiness which they

they might have had without it; for in the foregoing words he represents God as shewing great pity to the scattered remainders of a broken and distressed people; though he had punished them severely for their sins, and banished them out of their native country, yet he promiseth them, *that those who put their trust in him should possess the land, and again inherit his holy mountain, v. 13.* and therefore speaks *that the way might be cast up and prepared for their return*, and every impediment taken out of the way, *v. 14. for the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, will again dwell in his high and holy place, viz. at Hierusalem;* (so the words may be understood, for the Hebrew verb is future) but especially with those who were humbled for their sins, who are here called *the humble and contrite ones, v. 15.* For God would *not always contend with them*, for he knew they were not able to stand before him; *v. 16.* and although his punishment of them was just for their sins, *v. 17.* yet *God took notice of their repentance*, and would therefore *heal their breaches*, and conduct them back again to their own land, and thereby give so great an occasion of joy and triumph, that by it he

is said to restore comforts to those who mourned for the calamities they lay under, v. 18. yea he would grant them so much inward peace and outward prosperity, that they should far and near joyn in their praises to God for it ; and therefore he is said to create the fruit of the lips peace, peace, &c. But all this while they must have a care of deceiving themselves though God did restore them to their own land with abundance of joy and peace, in expectation that the remembrance of their former calamities and the present blessings they enjoyed would make them abhor the sins which had provoked God to punish them ; yet if they should return to their wickedness again, or continue in it after so great mercies, they would soon find that their wickedness would overthrow their peace, and nothing but discontent and trouble would follow upon it, as the natural product of it. *For like the troubled Sea that is tossed up and down* with violent and impetuous winds, fumes and rages, one wave beating against another, and the effect of all this commotion is nothing but casting upon the neighbour shore a greater burden of unprofitable mire and dirt: such would the effect of their wickedness

wickedness be among them, v. 20. it would make them restless and unquiet in themselves, having no one certain motion but tossed up and down with every contrary blast of wind, and producing nothing by all these various agitations but unprofitable counsels and unsuccessful designs. But lest the Prophet should be supposed to speak all this out of discontent and passion, he confirms what he had said from the mouth of God in these few but smart words of the Text. *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.*

The words we see are general and indefinite, both as to the nature of the *peace* here mentioned, and the notion of *Wickedness* implied; and therefore I shall handle them in their due extent by shewing that no one kind of true peace is consistent with any sort of prevailing wickedness: whether by *peace* we mean the *peace* a man hath *with himself* in the tranquillity of his mind; or the *peace* which men have in society with one another. In either of these senses it will appear true, *that there is no peace to the wicked.*

I. Taking *peace*, for the *tranquillity of a man's mind*; in order to which it is
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necessary for a man to have some certain foundation to build his peace upon, and that he be secured from those things which will overthrow it: both which shew it impossible for a wicked man to have any true peace in his mind, because he can have no certain grounds to build it upon; and those things do accompany his wickedness, which will certainly overthrow it:

1. A Wicked man can have no certain foundations for his peace. By which I do not mean any contracted dulness, or brutish stupidity, which if we will call *peace* the most insensible parts of the creation do infinitely exceed us in it, but such a composure and settlement of our minds, which ariseth from a due consideration of things; and differs as much from the former temper as a vigorous and healthful state of body doth from the dull effects of a Lethargy. And such a peace as this no wicked man can ever have but upon one of these suppositions.

Either (1.) That Wickedness is but a meer name of disgrace set upon some kind of actions, but that really there is no such a thing as sin, or the differences of good and evil; or else,

(2.) Supposing there is such a thing
as

as sin, it is ridiculous to believe there ever should be such a punishment of it as men are affrighted with;

(3.) Or Lastly, supposing there be a punishment of sin to come, it is madness to abstain from the present pleasures of sin for the fear of it. These being only the imaginable grounds a wicked man can have any peace in his mind from; I shall particularly shew the falseness and the folly of them.

1. That there is no such thing as Sin or Wickedness in the world, and that the differences of good and evil are merely arbitrary things, and that those are names only imposed upon things by the more cunning sort of men to affright men from the doing some actions, and to encourage them to do others. But what a miserable case are those in, who can never enjoy any contentment in themselves unless all the differences of good and evil be utterly destroyed! We should conclude that man's condition desparate, who believes it impossible for him to have any ease in his mind, unless he could be transformed into the shape of a beast, or petrified into the hardness of a rock. These are things not utterly impossible, but yet they are possible in so
remote

remote a degree, that it is all one to say, he can have no ease, as to say, that he expects it only upon those terms: But it is utterly inconsistent with the supposition of humane nature, or a being endued and acting with reason, to make all things equally good or evil. For what doth reason signifie as it respects the actions of men, but a faculty of discerning what is good and fitting to be done, from what is evil and ought to be avoided? And to what purpose is such a faculty given us, if there be no such difference in the nature of things? Might not men with equal probability argue that there is no such thing as a difference in the things about which life and sense are conversant, as in those wherein reason is employed? With what impatience would those men be heard who should assert that there is no such thing as a difference in the qualities of meats and drinks, but that they do all equally tend to the preservation of life, that it is pedantical and beneath a Gentleman to talk of any such thing as *Poisons*, that will so suddenly and certainly destroy mens lives, and that these are things which none talk of or believe besides those whose trade is either to kill or cure men? With how much

much wit and subtilty might a man argue upon these things, that it is impossible for any man to define what the nature of poison is, or in what manner it destroys the life of man, that men have conquered the malignity of it by use, and that the same things which have been poison to some, have been food and nourishment to others? But notwithstanding all these plausible arguments, none of these brave spirits dare venture the experiment upon themselves: and yet these (only changing the terms) are the very same arguments used against the natural differences of good and evil; *viz.* the difficulty of defining or setting the exact bounds of them, and the different customs or apprehensions of men in the world concerning the things which are called good and evil. If we proceed farther to the objects of sense, how ridiculous would those persons appear that should with a mighty confidence go about to perswade men, that the differences between light and darkness, between pleasure and pain, between smells and tastes and noises are but phantastick and imaginary things? Who would ever believe that those are men of the most excellent sight to whom light and darkness are

are equal? (for others who pretend not to so much wit, are wont to call such persons blind.) Or that those have the most exquisite sense, that feel no difference of pain and pleasure, (which was wont to be thought the sign of no sense at all.) And surely the persons I am now arguing against, love their palats too well, to admire those who can discern no difference of tastes; and would be well enough contented to be thought deaf if they could put no distinction between the pleasant sound of vocal or instrumental Musick, and the harsh jarring of two Saws drawn cross each other. Thus it appears that nothing would make men more ridiculous than to explode and laugh at the difference that there is in the means of life and the objects of sense. Let us now proceed higher: Dare any man say there is no such thing as Reason in Man, because there appears so little of the truth of it in Men, and so much of the counterfeit of it in Brutes? or that there is no such thing as a difference of Truth and Falshood, because they are so commonly mistaken for one another? What reason then imaginable can there be, that there should not be as wide a
D d distance

distance in the matters of our choice, as in the objects of our sense and understanding? Is it that we have natural faculties of sense and perception, but not of choice? that, every one is able to refute by his constant experience, that finds a greater liberty in his choice, than in his perception. The reason of which is wholly unintelligible, unless a difference be found in the nature of the things proposed to his choice; that some have a greater excellency and commendableness in them, more agreeable to humane nature, more satisfactory to the minds of those who choose them, than others are. And must all this difference be destroyed, merely because all men are not agreed, what things are good and what evil? We call goodness the beauty of the soul; and do men question whether there be such a thing as beauty at all, because there are so many different opinions in the world about it? Or is deformity ever the less real, because the several nations of the world represent it in a colour different from their own? Those arguments then against the natural differences of good and evil must needs appear ridiculous, which will be granted to hold in nothing else but only the thing in question.

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on. And yet in the midst of all the ruins and decays of humane nature, we find such evident footsteps and impressions of the differences of good and evil in the minds of men, which no force could extinguish, no time could deface, no customs could alter. Let us search the records of ancient times, and enquire into the later discoveries of nations, we shall find none so barbarous and brutish as not to allow the differences of good and evil; so far as to acknowledge, that there are some things which naturally deserve to be praised, and others which deserve to be punished. Whereas if good and evil were merely names of things, there can be no reason assigned, why praise and honour should necessarily belong to some things, and infamy and disgrace to follow others. If the things themselves be arbitrary, the consequences of them would be so too. But is it possible to imagine that any man should deserve to be punished as much for being true to his trust, as for betraying it; for honouring his Parents, as for destroying them; for giving to every one their due, as for all the arts of injustice and oppression? Is it possible for men to suffer as much in their esteem, for their fidelity,

temperance, and chastity, as they always do for their falseness, intemperance, and lasciviousness? How comes the very name of a lie to be a matter of so much reproach and dishonour, that the giving of it is thought an injury so great as cannot be expiated without the satisfaction of the giver's blood, if it be in it self so indifferent a thing? Nay, I dare appeal to the consciences of the most wicked persons, whether they are so well pleased with themselves, when they come reeking from the satisfaction of their lusts, and sodden with the continuance of their debaucheries, as when they have been paying their devotions to God, or their duties to their Parents, or their respects to their Country or Friends? Is there not (whether they will or no) an inward shame, and secret regret and disquiet following the one, and nothing but ease and contentment the other? What should make this difference in those persons who love their vices far more than they do the other? and if it were possible for them, would bring vertue more out of countenance than sin is: yet after all their endeavours, though vice hath the stronger Interest, vertue hath the greater Reverence. Thus considering humane nature

nature as it is, we find indelible characters remaining upon it of the natural differences of good and evil ; but then if we consider it with a respect to the Maker of it, that will cast a clearer light upon them, and make those characters appear more discernible. For nothing can be more absurd than to imagine a creature owing its being, and all it hath to the bounty of a Being infinite in all Perfections, and yet not to be obliged to give all honour, worship and service to it. To rip up the bowels of a Mother to whom a man owes his coming into the world ; to assassinate a Prince, to whom he owes all the honours and riches he hath in it, are crimes of so black a nature, that the worst of Men can hardly be supposed to commit them, nor the worst of Devils to defend them : But to blaspheme God and to deride his service, seems to have a much greater malignity in it, in as much, as our obligations to his honour and service, are much greater than they can be to any created Being. But if there be no natural differences of good and evil, even this must be accounted an indifferent thing, as well as the former : and what safety can there be in conversing with those men, whom

no bonds of Religion, Nature, or Gratitude can tye? Let us, if it were possible, suppose a Society of men constituted of such who make all things equally good and evil in their own nature, what a monstrous *Leviathan* would they make among them? no Religion, no Law, no Kindness, no Promises, no Trust, no Contracts could ever oblige them not to do any thing which they thought might be done with safety. By which it appears that these principles are so inconsistent with humane Nature, and all the bonds of Religion and Duty, that whoever owns them must suppose mankind more savage than the beasts of prey, he must renounce his Reason, destroy all Religion, and disown a Deity. For if there be a God, we must be inviolably bound to observe and obey him; and the very notion of a God implies a Being infinitely perfect; and if there be such perfections in God, they cannot but be so in their own nature, and if they be so in their own nature, they must in their degree be so in us as well as in him; so that if Goodness, Holiness and Righteousness be absolute perfections as they are in God, they must be perfections so far as they are in us; and the contrary
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must be imperfections; which makes the differences of good and evil so far from being arbitrary, that those things which agree to the perfections of God as well as his will must needs be good, and those which are repugnant to them must needs be evil. The result of all is, that if a wicked man can have no peace in his mind, without overthrowing the differences of good and evil, he can have no peace without the greatest violence offered to God, to nature, and himself; and if this be the way to Peace, let his Reason judge.

2. The second foundation which a wicked man must build his peace upon is, that supposing there be such a thing as sin, yet that men have no cause to disturb themselves with the fears of so great a punishment to follow after, as that which sinners are afrighted with. But what security can a sinner have against the fears of punishment when his conscience condemns him for the guilt of his sins? Is it that God takes no notice at all of the actions of men, that he will not disturb his own eternal peace and happiness by observing all their follies? So some of old imagined, who pretended that out of meer kindness to the Deity they gave

him his *Quietus est*, and took from him as much as in them lay, the care and government of the world: but it was really a greater kindness to their lusts which made them do it, and makes many now-a-days so willing upon the same frivolous pretences to exclude the providence of God out of the world; for can any man who considers what God is, think his providence inconsistent with his happiness? If we speak of such weak and imperfect Beings as the wisest of mankind are, it might not a little contribute to their peace to be eased of the cares of Government. But the reason of that is, because all things cannot be foreseen by them before they happen, nor well managed when they do; whence come oversights and disappointments, and consequently all the uneasie effects of these. But when we speak of God, we speak of a Being infinitely Wise and Powerful, from whom nothing can be hid, and whom nothing can resist: and what can be imagined more easie than for a conjunction of infinite Wisdom and Power, to contrive and manage all the affairs of the world? If therefore wicked men could suppose that God could not know what they did, or could not punish them if he knew it, they

they might indulge themselves in greater security: but to suppose his Wisdom so great that he cannot but know their actions; and his Power so irresistible, that it is impossible for them to stand before him when he designs to punish; to flatter themselves with the hopes of impunity is an extravagant piece of folly and madness. Or is it then, that though God doth take notice of their actions, he will not be so much displeased as to punish them? but this is as repugnant to the Justice and Holiness of God, as the other was to his Wisdom and Power. Will not the righteous God, who hath made Laws to govern mankind, see to the execution of them? for if he did not hate sin, why did he so strictly forbid it? if he doth hate sin, he will severely punish it. Nay, hath he not been severe already in the execution of his judgments upon the world for sin? what did *Adam* and his posterity suffer for the first sin? what did the old world, *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, the people of the Jews suffer for their wickedness? And is not he the same God still? Is his hand shortned that he cannot strike, or doth his heart fail that he dare not punish? Surely of all nations we have no cause to think so, and of all Ages, not
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in this of ours; wherein we have smarted so much by the just displeasure of God against our sins. But where then lies the sinner's hope? Is it at last, that though God may sometimes punish men in this life for their sins, he will never do it in that to come? If he could have said it was impossible he should do it, and proved it sufficiently, there might have been some ground for his security, but that is impossible he should ever do; but to hope he will not do it when he hath declared that he will, is instead of bringing peace to his own mind to set God at variance with himself. For nothing can be more plainly revealed, more frequently inculcated, more earnestly pressed than

(a) Rom.
2. 5, 6, 8, 9.

(a) that there is a day of wrath to come, wherein the righteous judgment of God shall be revealed; and wherein God will render to every man according to his deeds: wherein tribulation, and anguish, and wrath shall be upon every soul of man that doth evil; wherein the secrets of all hearts and actions shall be disclosed, when the graves shall be

(b) Joh. 5.
29.

opened, (b) and they that have done good shall come forth to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation. For the Lord Jesus himself, even he who died for the salva-

tion

tion of all penitent sinners, (a) *shall be* (a) 2 Theff. 1. 7, 8, 9.
revealed from heaven with his mighty Angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the Gospel of Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power. Then shall that dreadful sentence be pass'd upon all impenitent sinners, (b) *Depart* (b) Matth. 25. 41.
from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels. Which words are so full of horreur and astonishment as might not only disturb the sinner's peace and security, but awaken him to such a sense of his sins, as to loath, abhor and forsake them, and thereby fly from the wrath to come.

3. But after all this, is it possible to suppose, that any should think their present pleasures would countervail all the miseries of another life? which is the last imaginable foundation for a sinner's peace, while he continues in his wickedness. The most professed *Epicureans* that ever were, made this one of their fundamental maxims, That no pleasure was to be chosen, which brought after it a pain greater than it self: on which account they made temperance and sobriety necessary to a pleasant life, because excesses

cesses and debaucheries leave far more of burden than of ease behind them. But what would these men have said, if they had believed the intolerable anguish of a tormented mind, the racks of an enraged conscience, the fire of everlasting vengeance to be the consequent of all the pleasures of sin? they must upon their own principles have concluded that none but mad-men and fools would ever venture upon them. And that not only because the after-pain would so much exceed the present pleasure; but because the fears of that pain to come must abate proportionably of the pleasure which might otherwise be enjoyed. Suppose a man certainly knew that upon the pleasing his palate with the most excellent wine, and gratifying his appetite with the most delicate food, he must be racked with the Stone, and tormented with the Gout as long as he should live; can we imagine such a person could have any pleasure in his mind (whatever his palate had) in the enjoyment of them while he did consider the consequent of them. But what are these miseries compared with the insupportable horror of a conscience loaden with guilt, sunk under despair, having a gnawing worm and unquench-

unquenchable flames? the wrath of an almighty God, and the fury of his vengeance to encounter with, without the least hopes of conquering? I do not now ask, what the sinner will then think of all his Atheism and Infidelity when the greatness of his misery shall convince him that it is an Almighty hand which lays it upon him; nor what pleasure he can have in the thoughts of his former excesses, when not one drop can be procured for the mitigation of his flames? nor what satisfaction those lusts have given him, the very thoughts of which pierce his soul, and if it were possible would rend him in pieces with the torment of them? but that which I demand is, what peace of mind a sinner can have in this world who knows not how soon he may be dispatched to that place of torment? can he bind the hands of the Almighty, that he shall not snatch him away till he doth repent? or can he reverse the decrees of heaven, or suspend the execution of them? can he abrogate the force of his Laws, and make his own terms with God? can he dissolve the chains of darkness with a few death-bed tears, and quench the flames of another world with them? O foolish sinners, who hath bewitched them

them with these deceitful dreams! will heaven-gates fly open with the strength of a few dying groans? will the mouth of hell be stopt with the bare lamentation of a sinner? Are there such charms in some penitent words extorted from the fear of approaching misery, that God himself is not able to resist them? Certainly there is no deceit more dangerous, nor I fear more common in the world, than for men to think that God is so easie to pardon sin, that though they spend their lives in satisfying their lusts; they shall make amends for all by a dying sorrow and a gasping repentance. As though the unsaying what we had done, or wishing we had done otherwise since we can do it no longer, (for that is the bottom of all putting off repentance to the last) were abundant compensation to the justice of God, for the affronts of his Majesty, contempt of his Laws, abuse of his Patience, and all the large indictments of wilful and presumptuous sins, which the whole course of our lives is charged with. The supposal of which makes the whole design of Religion signify very little in the world.

Thus

Thus we have examined the foundations of a sinner's peace, and found them very false and fallacious.

2. We are now to shew that those things do accompany a sinner's course of life, which certainly overthrow his peace; which are these two. 1. The reflections of his Mind. 2. The violence of his Passions.

1. The reflections of his Mind, which he can neither hinder nor be pleased with. No doubt if it were possible for him to deprive himself of the greatest excellency of his being, it would be the first work he would do, to break the glass which shews him his deformity. For as our Saviour said, (a) *Every one that doth* ^{(a) John} *evil hateth the light, lest his deeds should* ^{3. 20.} *be reprov'd*; not only the light without which discovers them, but that light of conscience within, which not only shines but burns too. Hence proceeds that great uneasiness which a sinner feels within as often as he considers what he hath done amiss, which we call the remorse of conscience; and is the natural consequence of the violence a man offers to his reason in his evil actions. It was thought a sufficient vindication of the innocency of two Brothers by the *Roman* Judges, when

(a) *Pro*
Sextioc. 23.

when they were accused for Parricide; that although their Father was murdered in the same room where they lay, and no other person was found on whom they could fasten the suspicion of it, yet in the morning the door was open and they fast asleep. For as the Orator saith, (a) *No man can imagine, that those who had broken all the Laws of God and nature by so great an act of wickedness, could presently sleep upon it: for they who do such things can neither rest without care, nor breathe without fear. We are not to believe, saith he, the fables of the Poets, as though wicked men were haunted and terrified with the burning torches of the furies; but every man's wickedness is the greatest terror to himself, and the evil thoughts which pursue wicked men are their constant and domestick furies.* It would be endless to repeat what force the more civil Heathens have given to conscience either way, as to the peace which follows innocency, and the disquiet which follows guilt. Which they looked on as the great thing which governed the world, (b) *Quâ sublatâ jacent omnia*, as the Orator speaks, without which all things would be in great disorder; for these punishments they are sure not to escape, (c) though they

(b) *De N.*
Deorum,
l. 3.

(c) *De leg.*
l. 1.

they may do others; and these they thought so great and weighty that upon this ground they vindicated divine providence as to the seeming prosperity of wicked men, thinking it the most unreasonable thing in the world, to call those persons happy who suffered under the severe lashes of their own consciences. If there were such a force in the consciences of those who had nothing but the light of nature to direct them, how much greater weight must there be when (a) *the terrors of the Lord* are made known by himself, (b) *and the wrath of God revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness of men*? I know that wicked men in the height of their debaucheries pretend to be above these things, and are ready to laugh at them as the effects of a strong spleen and a weak brain: but I appeal to their most sober thoughts, when the streams of wine are evaporated, and the intoxication of evil company is removed from them, when in the deep and silent night, they revolve in their minds the actions of the foregoing day; what satisfaction they then take in all the sinful pleasures they have pursued so eagerly? but especially, when either their lusts have con-

(a) 2 Cor.

5. 11.

(b) Rom.

1. 18.

sumed their bodies, or the vengeance of God hath overtaken them; when death begins to seize upon their vitals, and themselves not wholly stupified through the power of their sins or their disease, let then, if it were possible, any represent the fears, the horreur and astonishment which the consciences of wicked men labour under in remembrance of their evil actions. How mean and poor would they leave themselves if with all their honours and riches they could purchase to themselves, a reprieve from death and from the miseries which follow after it? what would they then give for the comfort of a good conscience, and the fruit of a holy, righteous, and sober life? with what another sense of Religion do men whose minds are awakened speak then, in comparison of what they did in the days of their mirth and jollity? Neither is this *to take them at the greatest disadvantage*, as some of them have been ready to say; for I suppose their minds as clear then as at any time, and so much the clearer, because freed from the impediments of such freedom of their thoughts at another time; for the same thoughts would have possessed them before, only the pleasures and the hopes of
life

life diverted their minds from them; but now the nearness of the things they feared, and the weight and consequence of them make them more diligently examine and impartially consider them. But that demonstrates the great misery of a sinner's State; that what cures the other greatest troubles of our life, doth the most increase his, which is the exercise of reason and consideration, that allays the power of griefs, that easeth the mind of vain fears, that prevents many troubles and cures others, that governs other passions and keeps them in their due bounds; but this is it which of all things doth the most increase the trouble of a wicked man's mind; for the more he considers, the worse he finds his condition; and while he finds his condition so bad, he can never enjoy any peace in his mind.

2. The violence of his Passions: those a wicked man hath lost the command of, or else he could never be a wicked man; and whosoever is under the power of any unruly passion, forfeits all his peace by it. For what peace can ever be expected in such a State of violence and usurpation, where the calm government of reason is cast off as an unne-

cessary burden, and every passion under the pretence of liberty sets up for an arbitrary power? Nay what confusion and disorder must needs follow, where the powers of the mind, which ought to keep all in order, are themselves in subjection to their own slaves: and none ever govern so ill as those which ought to obey. How serene and quiet is the mind of a man where the superiour faculties preserve their just authority? How composed is his temper, how moderate his desires, how well governed his fears! But where once that authority is lost, how extravagant is the rage of men, how unruly their lusts, how predominant their fears! What peace had *Xerxes* in his mind, when in stead of conquering his foolish passion, he challenged Mount *Athos* into the field, and no doubt would have run fast enough if he had seen it moving? What pleasure was it to see that mighty Monarch whip the Sea in a rage, as though the Waves had been under his discipline, and would run the faster for the fear of his rod? What harm had the hair of his head done to that man who pulled it off with the violence of his passion, *as though*, as the Philosopher told him, *baldness would assuage*

assuage his grief? Was ever *Varus* the nearer to restoring his Legions for *Augustus* knocking his head against the wall in a rage about the loss of them? What injury did *Neptune* suffer, when he displaced his image in the *Circensian* games, because he had an ill Voyage at Sea? What height of madness and folly did that modern Prince's rage betray him to, who, as the French Moralist saith, (a) *having received a blow from heaven, (a) Mon-*
swore to be revenged on Almighty God, tagne. Eff.
and for ten years space forbid all publick l. i. c. 4.
exercise of devotion towards him? I instance in these things to let us see there is nothing so ridiculous, nothing so absurd, nothing so irreligious but a violent passion may betray men to. And if such things ever break forth into actions, what may we conceive the inward disturbance is, where the outward shew (which usually dissembles the inward passion,) betrayed so much rage and disorder; for where such flames break out, what combustion may we conceive within? But it is not only this kind of passion which is so great an enemy to the peace of a man's mind, but when his desires are restless, and his fears unconquerable; and this is the case of

every wicked man. His lusts inflame him and the means he uses to quench them inrage them more; his ambition grows greater as his honour doth; and there is no hopes of a cure, where the disease thrives under the remedy; his love of riches is necessary to maintain his honour and feed his lusts; and where passions so great, so many, so different, all increase by being gratified, what disturbance and confusion follows? But supposing that vices in men may agree (as the Devils in Hell do) to the destruction of men's souls; yet what security can a wicked man have against the power of his fears? and we all know no passion disquiets more than that doth? And how many sorts of fears possess a sinner's mind? fears of disappointments, fears of discovery, and fears of punishment; but supposing he could master all the rest, and the fears of punishment as to this life too; yet the fears of that to come is sufficient to rob him of any peace in his mind, and impossible to be overcome by him. For no sound reason can be given against his fears, but the strongest arguments in the world to confirm them. Nay the greatest grounds of others comforts are the

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the strongest foundations for his fears, as the belief of a God, and Providence, and a life to come: And what can give that man peace, whom the very thoughts of the God of peace doth disturb so much? That is the first kind of *Peace* we have shewed to be inconsistent with a course of wickedness, which is the *peace and tranquillity of a man's own mind.*

2. Taking this peace for an *outward peace*, and so these words not in respect of every person in particular, and that peace which belongs to him as such, but as they are joyned together in community; so they imply that nothing undermines our *civil peace* and the prosperity of a nation so much as prevailing wickedness doth. So that although mighty deliverances were given the people of the Jews in a very strange and unexpected manner, when God raised up *Cyrus* his servant, a man from whom no kindness was expected, and made him the great instrument of settling the people in their land under their own lawful Princes, and restored the true worship of God among them; yet if they grew wanton in the days of their prosperity, and forgot the God who delivered them,

they must expect a return of Calamities again upon them; for *there is no Peace, saith my God, to the wicked. i. e.* This is the method of his providence, and the way he useth in governing the world; while Religion and Vertue flourish among them, they may hope for peace and prosperity; but if those decay, and sin, and wickedness prevail, no other arts imaginable will secure a lasting peace, or an abiding tranquillity. All other ways are but tricks and devices, and there are many of them in the hearts of men, but the Counsel of the Lord that shall stand against them all; and that Counsel he hath declared himself by the mouth of another Prophet,

(*) Jer. 18. (a) *At what instant I shall speak concerning a Nation and concerning a Kingdom to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then will I repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.* Thus we find it was in this people of the Jews, upon their first return from captivity they shewed some zeal towards the rebuilding the Temple and setting the worship of God there; but this fit did not hold them long, they soon fell back to their former sins and disobedience to the Laws of God;

(*) Jer. 18.
9, 10.

God; upon this they brake out into greater schisms and factions in matters of Religion than ever were known among them before; for then the *Pharisees* fell into a separation under a pretence of greater sanctity and severity of life, and these by their shew of zeal gained a mighty interest among the people, so great that the Princes stood in awe of them; then the *Sadducees*, (who were most part Courtiers, as *Josephus* tells us) out of opposition to the other, looked on Religion as a meer political institution, cried out against faction and popularity, and questioned at least whether there were any Spirits or life to come. And what peace followed upon these things? very little among themselves we may be sure by the heats and animosities that were continually among them; the issue of which was, the Temple was profaned by *Antiochus*, rifled by *Pompey*; their own Princes deposed, and Usurpers ruled over them; and when the Son of God himself could not reclaim them, their Temple, Nation, and Government were all involved in one common ruin. Thus we see how these words of the Prophet were fulfilled upon this people.

But

But some have been ready to say that *God's proceedings with the Jews* ought not to be drawn into an example to any other nations, because his dealings with them were peculiar, and by vertue of a particular Covenant which God made with them, which he hath not done with any other nation in the world. This objection were of great force, if God himself had not in the words before mentioned, declared the same concerning any other Nation or Kingdom, and if the instances were not as remarkable in other people as in that of the Jews. If we search the Monuments of former Ages, and consider the strange revolutions which have happened in the mighty Empires and Kingdoms of the World; we shall find no one circumstance more considerable in them than this, That the Nations which God hath made use of for a scourge to others, have been remarkable for nothing so much, as for the vertues opposite to the most prevailing vices among those who were overcome by them. Thus when the *Chaldean* Monarchy fell, the *Persians* who were the sword in God's right hand, were eminent for nothing more than their great temperance and frugality, while the *Babylonians* perished by

by their luxury and effeminacy. And when the *Persian* Monarchy degenerated into the same vices, the *Macedonians* were raised up to be the executioners of God's wrath upon them, because they were at that time freer than any other people from those softening and destroying vices. And when the *Persian* luxury had infected their Conquerours, the severe Discipline and Vertue of the *Romans* made them more successful in subduing the remainders of the *Græcian* Empire, than their courage and number could. And when the *Romans* themselves (after a long time of God's forbearance with them, and several respites from punishment by the vertue and conduct of such excellent Princes as *Antoninus* and *Alexander Severus* in the Heathen, and *Constantine* and *Theodosius* in the Christian Empire) fell into as great a degeneracy of manners as any we ever read of, then did God let loose (as it were) the *Goths* and *Vandals* and other barbarous Nations out of their several Dens, who seemed to be designed rather to destroy than to conquer. So sudden, so numerous, so irresistible in most places were the incursions they made. But what was it which gave them so strange success?

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was it their long practice and skill in military affairs? No, they were rude and unexperinced: was it their mighty courage? No, they were despised by the *Romans* as great Cowards, and begged for peace when it was denied them. But as (a) *Salvian* tells us who lived in those times and knew the manners of both sides, the *Goths* and *Vandals* were of a very severe chastity, among whom fornication was punished sharply, and adultery a crime scarce heard of; whereas all manner of uncleanness and licentiousness did abound among the *Romans*, who yet were then called Christians. The *Goths* were devout and pious, acknowledging divine providence, making their solemn supplications to God before their victories, and returning him the praise of them afterwards; but the *Romans* were fallen into that degree of Irreligion and *Atheism*, that nothing was more common among them than to droll upon Religion. (b) *A nostris omnia ferme religiosa ridentur*, as *Salvian* speaks: they thought all things managed by chance or fate, and ascribed very little to God. And where these sins abounded most, they were carried up and down as by a divine instinct, as they confessed

(a) *Sal. l. 7.*
p. 161. &c.

(b) P. 166.

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confessed themselves, and where they conquered, (a) as he particularly speaks (a) P.168. of the *Vandals* in *Africa*, they purged all the stews of uncleanness, and made so great a reformation by the severity of their Laws, that even the *Romans* themselves were chaste among them. Thus we see how those great and mighty Empires have been broken to pieces by the weight of their impieties falling upon them.

May the consideration then of these things move us in time to a reformation of our lives, before our iniquities grow full and ripe for vengeance. We have seen many revolutions, and God knows how many more we may see; if that should be true of us, which the same Author saith of the *Romans* in the midst of all their changes, *Sola tantum vitia perdurant*, their vices remained the same still. Thanks be to God, that things have a fairer appearance at present than they have had, and never so good a time to amend as now: but if men flatter themselves with present security, and their sins increase as their fears abate, the clouds which seem dispersed may soon gather again, and the face of the Heavens will change if we do not.

And

And if it be not in our power to reclaim others from their sins, let us endeavour to preserve the honour of our Church by amending our own, and convince our enemies by living better than they. And give me leave to say, and so I conclude, that among all the expedients which have been thought of for the peace of this Church and Nation, that of leaving off our sins, and leading vertuous and exemplary lives, will at last prove to be the most successful.

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SERMON XI.

Preached at

WHITE-HALL.

MARCH 27. 1672.

2 CORINTH. V. 2.

*Knowing therefore the terrour of the
Lord, we perswade men.*

IF ever any Religion was in all respects accomplished for so noble a design as the reformation of mankind, it was the Christian, whether we consider the Authority of those who first delivered it, or the weight of the arguments contained in it, and their agreeableness to the most prevailing passions of humane nature. Although the world was strangely degenerated before the coming of Christ; yet not to so great a degree, but that there were some who not only saw the necessity of a cure, but offered

offered their assistance in order to it; whose attempts proved the more vain and fruitless, because they laboured under the same distempers themselves which they offered to cure in others; or the method they prescribed was mean and trivial, doubtful and uncertain, or else too nice and subtle to do any great good upon the world. But Christianity had not only a mighty advantage by the great holiness of those who preached it; but by the clearness and evidence, the strength and efficacy of those arguments which they used to perswade men. The nature of them is such, that none who understand them can deny them to be great; their clearness such, that none that hear them can choose but understand them; the manner of recommending them such, as all who understood themselves could not but desire to hear them. No arguments can be more proper to mankind than those which work upon their reason and consideration; no motives can stir up more to the exercise of this than their own happiness and misery; no happiness and misery can deserve to be so much considered as that which is eternal. And this eternal state is that which above all other things the
Christian

Christian Religion delivers with the greatest plainness, confirms with the strongest evidence, and enforces upon the consciences of men with the most powerful and perswasive Rhetorick. I need not go beyond my text for the proof of this, wherein we see that the Apostles design was *to perswade men, i.e.* to convince their judgments, to gain their affections, to reform their lives; that the argument they used for this end was no less than *the terroure of the Lord*, not the frowns of the World, nor the fear of Men, nor the malice of Devils; but the terroure of the Almighty, whose Majesty makes even the Devils tremble, whose Power is irresistible, and whose Wrath is insupportable. But it is not *the terroure of the Lord* in this world, which he here speaks of, although that be great enough to make us as miserable as we can be in this State: but *the terroure of the Lord* which shall appear at the dreadful day of judgment, of which he speaks in the verse before the text. (a) *For we (a) V. 10. must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

This is *the terroure* here meant which re-

lates to our final and eternal State in another world, *when we must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, &c.* And of this he speaks, not out of Poetical Fables, ancient Traditions, uncertain Conjectures, or probable Arguments, but from full assurance of the truth of what he delivers; *Knowing therefore the terrour of the Lord, we perswade men.* In which words we shall consider these particulars.

1. The argument which the Apostle makes choice of to perswade men, which is, *the terrour of the Lord.*
2. The great assurance he expresseth of the truth of it, *Knowing therefore the terrour of the Lord.*
3. The efficacy of it in order to the convincing and reforming mankind; *Knowing therefore, &c. we perswade men.*

1. The argument the Apostle makes choice of to perswade men by, *viz. the terrour of the Lord.* In the Gospel we find a mixture of the highest clemency and the greatest severity, the richest mercy and the strictest justice, the most glorious rewards and intollerable punishments; accordingly we find God therein described as a tender Father, and as a terrible Judge, as a God of peace,
and

and as a God of vengeance, as an everlasting happiness and a consuming fire ; and the Son of God as coming once with great humility, and again with Majesty and great glory ; once, with all the infirmities of humane nature, and again with all the demonstrations of a Divine power and presence ; once, as the Son of God to take away the sins of the world by his death and passion ; and again, as Judge of the world with flaming fire to execute vengeance on all impenitent sinners. The intermixing of these in the doctrine of the Gospel was necessary in order to the benefit of mankind by it, that such whom the condescension of his first appearance could not oblige to leave off their sins, the terrour of his second may astonish when they foresee the account that will be taken of their ingratitude and disobedience ; that such who are apt to despise the meanness of his birth, the poverty of his life, and the shame of his death, may be filled with horror and amazement when they consider the Majesty of his second coming in the clouds (a) to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly, not only of their ungodly deeds, but of all their hard speeches, which un-

(a) Jud.
v. 15.

godly sinners have spoken against him. And we shall easily see what great reason there is that this second coming of Christ to judgment should be called *the terrour of the Lord*, if we consider,

1. The terrour of the preparation for it.
2. The terrour of the appearance in it.
3. The terrour of the proceedings upon it.
4. The terrour of the sentence which shall then be passed.

(a) 2 Pet.
3. 10.

1. The terrour of the preparation for it; which is particularly described by St. Peter in these words, (a) *But the day of the Lord will come as a Thief in the night, in which the Heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the Elements shall melt with fervent heat; the Earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up.* This day will come *as a Thief in the night*, by way of surprise, when it is not looked for, and that makes it so much the more dreadful. A lesser calamity coming suddenly doth astonish more, than a far greater which hath been long expected; for, surprisals confound men's thoughts, daunt their spirits, and betray all the succours which reason offers. But when the surprise shall be one
of

of the least astonishing circumstances of the misery men fall into, what unconceivable horror will possess their minds at the apprehension of it? what confusion and amazement may we imagine the soul of that man in, whom our Saviour speaks of in his parable, who being pleased with the fulness of his condition, (a) *said to his* ^{(a) Luke 12. 19, 20.} *soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry : but God said to him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee ; then whose shall those things be that thou hast provided ?* Had God only said, This night shall thy barns be burnt, and thy substance consumed to ashes, which thou hast laid up for so many years, that would have caused a strange consternation in him for the present, but he might have comforted himself with the hopes of living and getting more. But, *this night shall thy soul be required of thee : O dreadful words ! O the tremblings of body, the anguish of mind, the pangs and convulsions of conscience which such a one is tormented with at the hearing of them ! What sad reflections doth he presently make upon his own folly ? And must all the mirth and ease I promised my self for so many years, be at an end now in a*

very few hours? Nay, must my mirth be so suddenly turned into bitter howlings, and my ease into a bed of flames? Must my soul be thus torn away from the things it loved, and go where it will hate to live and can never die? O miserable creature! to be thus deceived by my own folly, to be surpris'd after so many warnings, to betray my self into everlasting misery? Fear, horror and despair have already taken hold on me, and are carrying me, where they ~~will~~ never leave me.

These are the Agonies but of one single person whom death snatches away in the midst of his years, his pleasures and his hopes: but such as these the greatest part of the world will fall into when that terrible day of the Lord shall come. (a)

(a) Luke

17. 26, 27,
28, 29, 30.

For as it was in the days of Noe; so shall it be also in the day of the Son of Man; they did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entred into the Ark; and the flood came and destroyed them all: Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot, they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from Heaven and destroyed them all: Even thus shall it be in the

the

the day when the Son of Man is revealed.

(a) *For as a snare shall it come on all them* ^{(a) Ch. 21.}
that dwell on the face of the whole Earth. ^{35.}

If some of these expressions seem to relate to the unexpected coming of Christ to judgment upon *Hierusalem*, we are to consider that was not only a *fore-runner*, but a *figure* of Christ's coming to judge the World. And that may be the great reason why our Saviour mixeth his discourses of both these so much together as he doth: for not only the judgment upon that nation was a draught, as it were, *in little* of the great day, but the symptoms and fore-runners of the one were to bear a proportion with the other: among which the strange security of that people before their destruction was none of the least. And the surprise shall be so much the more astonishing when the day of the Lord shall come upon the whole World, as the terrour and consequents of that universal judgment shall exceed the overthrow of the Jewish Polity.

But supposing men were aware of its approach and prepared for it; the burning of the Temple and City of *Hierusalem*, though so frightful a spectacle to the beholders of it, was but a mean representation of the terrour that shall be at

the conflagration of the whole World. When *the Heavens shall pass away with a great noise*, or with a mighty force, as some interpret it, and *the Elements shall melt with fervent heat*; i. e. when all the fiery bodies in the upper regions of this World, which have been kept so long in an even and regular course within their several limits, shall then be let loose again, and by a more rapid and violent motion shall put the World into confusion and a flame together. For then the present frame of things shall be dissolved, and the bounds set to the more subtile and active parts of matter shall be taken away; which mixing with the more gross and earthy, shall sever them from each other, and by their whirling and agitation set them all on fire. And

(a) Rev. if (a) *the Stars falling to the Earth*, were to be understood in a literal sense, none seems so probable as this, That those æthereal fires shall then be scattered and dispersed throughout the Universe, so that the Earth and all the works that are therein shall be turned into one funeral Pile. Then the foundations of the Earth shall be shaken, and all the combustible matter which lies hid in the bowels of it shall break forth into prodigious flames;

(a) Rev.
6. 13.

flames; which while it rould up and down within, making it self a passage out, will cause an universal quaking in all parts of the Earth, and make the Sea to roar with a mighty noise, which will either by the violent heat spend it self in vapour and smoak, or be swallowed up in the hollow places of the deep. Neither are we to imagine that only the sulphureous matter within the Earth shall by its kindling produce so general a conflagration, (although some Philosophers of old thought that sufficient for so great an effect) but as it was in the deluge of water, (a) *the fountains of the great deep* (a) Gen. were broken up, and the windows of Hea- 7. 11. ven were opened; so shall it be in this deluge of fire, as one of the ancients calls it, not only mighty streams and rivers of Fire shall issue out of the bowels of the earth; but the cataraacts above shall discharge such abundance of thunder and lightning, wherein God will rain down fire and brimstone from Heaven, that nothing shall be able to withstand the force of it. Then the *Craters* or breaches made in the earth by horrible earthquakes, caused by the violent eruptions of Fire, shall be wide enough to swallow up not only Cities but whole Countries

Countries too: And what shall remain of the spoils of this devouring enemy within, shall be consumed by the merciless fury of the thunder and lightning above. What will then become of all the glories of the world which are now so much admired and courted by foolish men? What will then become of the most magnificent piles, the most curious structures, the most stately palaces, the most lasting monuments, the most pleasant gardens, and the most delightful countries? they shall be all buried in one common heap of ruins, when the whole face of the earth shall be like the top of mount *Ætna*, nothing but rubbish, and stones, and ashes, which, unskilful travellers have at a distance mistaken for Snow. What will then become of the pride and gallantry of the vain persons, the large possessions of the great, or the vast treasures of the rich? the more they have had of these things only, the more fuel they have made for this destroying fire, which will have no respect to the honours, the greatness, or the riches of Men. Nay, what will then become of (a) *the wicked and ungodly, who have scoffed at all these things, and walked after their own lusts, saying,*
Where

(a) 2 Pet.
3. 3, 4.

Where is this promise of his coming, because all things yet continue as they were from the beginning of the creation? When this great day of his wrath is come, how shall they be able to stand or escape his fury? Will they fly to the tops of the mountains? that were only to stand more ready to be destroyed from Heaven. Will they hide themselves in the dens and the rocks of the mountains? but there they fall into the burning furnaces of the earth; and *the mountains may fall upon them, but can never hide them from the wrath of the Lamb.* Will they go down into the deep and convey themselves to the uttermost parts of the Sea? but even there the storms and tempests of these shours of fire shall overtake them, and the vengeance of God shall pursue them to everlasting flames.

Consider now whether so dreadful a preparation for Christ's coming to judgment be not one great reason why it should be called *the terrour of the Lord*? For can any thing be imagined more full of horror and amazement than to see the whole world in a flame about us? We may remember (and I hope we yet do so) when the flames of one City filled

filled the minds of all the beholders with astonishment and fear: but what then would it do, not only to see the earth vomit and cast forth fire every where about us, and the Sea to boyl and swell and froth like water in a seething pot, but to hear nothing but perpetual claps of thunder, and to see no light in the Heavens, but what the flashings of lightning give? Could we imagine our selves at a convenient distance to behold the eruption of a burning mountain, such as *Ætna* and *Vesuvius* are, when the Earth about it trembles and groans, the Sea foams and rages, and the bowels of the Mountain roar through impatience of casting forth its burden, and at last gives it self ease by sending up a mixture of flames, and ashes, and smoak, and a flood of fire, spreading far and destroying where-ever it runs; yet even this, though it be very apt to put men in apprehensions and fears of this great day, falls very far short of the terrour of it. Could we yet farther suppose that at the same time we could see fire and brimstone raining from Heaven on *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, the earth opening to devour *Corah* and his company, *Belsazzar* trembling at the hand-writing against the

the wall, and the Jews destroying themselves in the fire of their Temple and City, this may somewhat higher advance our imaginations of the horror of the World's conflagration, but yet we cannot reach the greatness of it: in as much as *the Heavens and the Earth which are now, are kept in store, saith the Apostle, (a) reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men*; even those heavens whose beauty, and order, and motion, and influence we now admire, and that earth whose fruitful womb and richly adorned surface affords all the conveniencies of the life of man, must either be destroyed or at least purged and refined by this last and dreadful Fire. The expressions of which in Scripture being so frequent, so particular, so plain in Writers not affecting the lofty Prophetical stile, wherein fire is often used only to express the wrath of God, make it evident, that their meaning is not barely that the world shall be destroyed by the anger of God, but that this destruction shall be by real fire, which adds more to the sensible terror of it, to all that shall behold it.

2. The

2. The terrour of Christ's appearance in that day. The design of the Scripture in setting forth the coming of Christ to judgment is to represent it in such a manner to us as is most apt to strike us with awe and terrour at the apprehension of it. Now the greatest appearance of Majesty among men is, either when a mighty Prince marches triumphantly in the midst of a Royal Army, with all the splendor of a Court and the discipline of a Camp, having his greatest attendants about him, and sending his Officers before him, who with the sound of Trumpets give notice of his approach, and is every-where received with the shouts and acclamations of the people: or else, of a Prince, sitting upon his Throne of Majesty, set forth with all the Ornaments of State and Greatness, with all his Nobles and Courtiers standing about his Throne, and in his own Person calling Malefactors to account; and both these ways the appearance of Christ upon his second coming is represented to us,

(a) Matth. first (a) *as coming in the clouds of Heaven,*
24. 25. *i. e. riding triumphantly (as it were upon*

(b) 2 Thef. than the Son, having (b) *all the Hea-*
1. 7. *venly*

*Heavenly host attending upon him, and there-
fore he is said (a) to come with power and
great glory ; and sending his Angels with
a great sound of a trumpet before him ;
(b) after whom the Lord himself shall
descend from Heaven with a shout, with
the voice of the Archangel and with the
trump of God. Not as though we were
to imagine any material trumpet, as
some have grossly done, whose sound
could reach over the whole earth ; but
the sound of the last trumpet seems to be
the same with (c) the voice of the Son of
God, which the dead are said to hear and
live ; i. e. it shall be an effectual power
for raising the dead, which may be
therefore called the sound of the Trumpet,
because it supplies the use of one in call-
ing all people together, and doth more
lively represent to our capacities the
Majesty of Christ's appearance with all
the Heavenly host of Angels and Saints.
Thus when God appeared upon Mount
Sinai with his Holy Angels about him,
we there read (d) of the noise of the trum-
pet : and when God shewed his glorious
presence in the temple, he is said (e) to
go up with a shout and the Lord with the
sound of a trumpet : and when he sets him-
self against his enemies, God himself is
said*

(a) Matth.
24. 31.

(b) 1 Thef.
4. 16.

(c) John 5.
25.

(d) Pſal.
68. 17.
Exod. 20.
18.

(e) Pſal.
47. 5.

- (a) Zach. 9: 14. said (a) *to blow the trumpet, and to go with the whirlwinds of the South.* But besides this, we find Christ upon his second coming described as (b) *sitting on the throne of his glory, and all the Holy Angels about him, and all nations gathered before him to receive their sentence from him.* His Throne is said to be *great and white, i. e. most magnificent and glorious, and to make it the more dreadful;*
- (c) Chap. 4: 5. (c) *from it are said to proceed lightnings and thundrings and voices;* and so terrible is the Majesty of him that sits upon the throne (d) *that the Heaven and Earth are said to fly away from his face; but the dead, small and great, are to stand before him and to be judged according to their works.* And if the appearance of a common Judge be so dreadful to a guilty prisoner, if the Majesty of an earthly Prince begets an awe and reverence where there is no fear of punishment, what may we then imagine when Justice and Majesty both meet in the person of the Judge, and fear and guilt in the Conscience of Offenders? Therefore it is said, (e) *Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.*

We find the best of men in Scripture seized on with a very unusual consternation at any extraordinary divine appearance: The sight upon Mount Sinai was so terrible even to *Moses* (a) *that he* (a) Heb. *did exceedingly fear and quake*: the vision which *Isaiah* had of the glory of God made him cry out, (b) *Wo is me* (b) *Isai. 6.* *for I am undone, for mine eyes have seen* the King the Lord of Hosts: When *Daniel* saw his vision, all his strength and vigour was gone, and though an Angel raised him from the ground, yet he saith of himself (c) *that he stood trembling*. If (c) *Dan.* *these whom God appeared to in a way* 10. 8, 11. *of kindness were so possessed with fear,* what horror must needs seize upon the minds of the wicked when (d) *the Lord* (d) *Thes.* *Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven in* 1. 7, 8. *flaming fire on purpose to take vengeance upon them*? If in the days of his flesh there appeared so much Majesty in his Countenance, that when the Officers came to apprehend him, (e) *they went* (e) *John* *backward and fell to the ground*; how 13. 6. *unconceivably greater must it be when his design shall be to manifest that Glory to the world which he then concealed from it*? If in the short time of his transfiguration on the Holy Mount, his own

(a) Matth.

17.2.6.

Mark 9. 6.

Disciples were so far from being able to behold the glory of his presence, that (a) *they fell on their faces and were sore afraid*; how shall his enemies abide the day of his wrath, or how can they stand when he shall appear in the full glory of his Majesty and Power?

3. The terror of the proceedings upon that day: for then *we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ*, not for any ostentation of his greatness and power before the whole world, but that *every one may receive according to the things done in his body, whether it be good or bad*. How full of terror will the proceedings of that day be, wherein all secrets shall be disclosed, all actions examined, and all persons judged? That will be

(b) Rom.

2. 5.

(b) *the day of the Revelation of the righteous judgment of God*; this is the time of darkness, and therefore of disputes and quarrels; but then the wisdom and justice of divine providence shall be made manifest to all, *For every one shall receive according to his works*: and none will wonder at the sentence when they have seen the evidence. Then the most secret Impurities, the most subtle Hypocrisie, the most artificial Fraud, and the most dissembled Malice shall be laid open

open to publick view. For then (*b*) God (*a*) 1 Cor. will bring to light the hidden things of ⁴ ⁵ darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts. Then all the intrigues of lust and ambition so much the talk and business of this world, will be nothing but mens shame and reproach in the next. With what horror will they then behold all the sins of their lives set in order before them, when they seemed in this life, next to the committing them, to design as much as may be to forget them? Happy men! if their Consciences were like their Table-Books, that they could blot out and put in what they pleased themselves: Then all the black Catalogue of their sins would be presently expunged, and they would have nothing to be seen there, but the Characters of what at least seemed to be good. For though men be never so vicious they neither care that others should think so of them, nor they of themselves: of all things they do not love to dispute where they cannot answer, and that is their case in all their retorts of Conscience upon them. They know there is no drolling with so four a piece, as that within them is, for that makes the smartest and and most cutting repartees; which are uneasy to bear, but

impossible to answer. Therefore they study their own quiet, by seeking to keep that silent; and since they never hope to make Conscience dumb, they would have it sleep as much as may be: and although the starts it sometimes makes, shew that the most sleepy sinners have some troublesome dreams, yet if it doth not thoroughly awake in this world, it will do it with a vengeance in another. Then there will be no Musick and Dancing which can cure the biting of this *Tarantula* within; no *Opium* of stupidity or Atheism will be able to give one minutes rest. How will men then curse themselves for their own folly in being so easily tempted; and all those who laid traps and snares to betray them by? what different apprehensions of sin will they have then, from what they have now, while they are beset with temptations to it? O, will a forsaken sinner then say, had I ever believed as I ought to have done, that this would have been the fruit of a sinful life, I should have taken more care to prevent this misery than I have done! but O the folly of intemperance, the mischief of ambition, the rage of lust, the unsatiableness of covetousness, the madness of debauchery, and the

the dulness of Atheism, what have ye now brought me to, with all your pleasures and promises and flatteries while I lost my soul in your service! O that I had time to grow wise again; and once more to try whether I could withstand the cheats and witchcraft of a deceitful world! Now all my sins are as fresh before me, as if committed yesterday, and their burden is heavier than the weight of mountains however light I made of them then; I need no judge to condemn me but mine own Conscience; O that I could as easily see an end of my misery, as I do that I have deserved that there should be none. Thus shall the Book of Conscience be opened at that day in the heart of every impenitent sinner, wherein like *Ezekiels* roul he finds written within and without, (a) *Lamentation and Mourning and Woe.* (a) *Ezek.* Yet this will not be the only terror in the proceedings of that day, that all the sins that ever wicked men committed will be set in order before them with their several circumstances and aggravations, although the remembrance of them cannot be without extreme horror and amazement; but that they must undergo a strict and severe examination of all their actions by a most

powerful, holy and just Judge. And if it be so troublesome a thing to them in this world to go down into themselves, or to call to remembrance their own wicked actions which they have loved and delighted in ; what will it be when they must all be brought forth before the judgment seat of Christ who hates and abhors them ? If men can so hardly endure to have the deformity of their vices represented to them though very imperfectly here, how will they bear the dissecting and laying them open in the view of the whole world ? When the smallest fibres and the most subtile threads in our hearts shall be curiously examined, and the influence they have had upon our actions fully discovered. When sins that have been despised for their littleness, or unregarded for their frequency, or laughed at as no sins at all, shall appear to have had a greater venom in them, than men would imagine. What shall they think then of their great and presumptuous sins ; whereby they have not only offered violence to God and his Laws, but to the dictates of their own Consciences in committing them ? Never think that length of time will abate the severity of the enquiry, or lessen the displeasure of God

God against thee for them. Remember the case of *Amalek*, how God dealt with that people in this world for a sin committed 400 years before, and then think whether God be not in earnest, when he tells us how much he hates sin ; and how severe he will be in the punishment of it ?

I remember, saith God, (a) what Amalek (a) 1 Sam. did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in 15. 2, 3.

the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have and spare them not ; but slay both man and woman, infant and suck-

ling, &c. What ? a whole nation to be destroyed for one sin, and for a sin they thought to be none at all who committed it, and for a sin at so great a distance of time from the commission of it ? But I forbear. I know not whether there be

such another instance of God's severity in Scripture, but it is such as may justly make us cry out with the Psalmist, (b)

If thou Lord shouldst thus mark iniquities, (b) Psal. 103. 3.

O Lord who shall stand ? But although God in this world so seldom shews his severity, and tempers it with so much kindness, we have no reason to expect he should do so in another. For here he hath declar-

ed that (c) mercy rejoiceth against judg- (c) James 2. 13.

ment. This being the time (d) of Gods pa- (d) Rom. 2. 4.

G g 4

tience

2 Pet. 3. 9.

(a) Heb.
10. 31.

tience and forbearance and goodness towards sinners, being not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance; but if men will despise the riches of his goodness, if they will still abuse his patience, if they will trample under foot the means of their own salvation, then they shall to their unspeakable sorrow find, that there is a day of wrath to come, wherein their own dreadful experience will tell them, (a) That it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. For that will be a day of justice without mercy, a day of vengeance without pity, a day of execution without any further patience. Then no vain excuses will be taken, whereby men seek to palliate their sins and give ease to their minds now. It will be to no purpose to charge thy wilful sins upon the infirmity of thy nature, the power of temptation, the subtilty of the Devil, the allurements of company, the common practice of the world, the corruption of the age, the badness of education, the folly of youth; all these and such like excuses will be too weak to be made then, when it shall appear to thy eternal confusion, that thy own vicious inclination swayed thee beyond them all. Then there

there will be as little place for intreaties, as for vain excuses; God shews his great pity and indulgence to mankind now, that he is so ready to hear the prayers and grant the desires of all penitent sinners, but for those who stop their ears to all his instructions, and will not hearken to the reproofs of his word or the rebukes of their own consciences, but contemn all sober Counsels and scoff at Religion; what can they expect from him, but that (a) *when they shall call upon him he will not answer, and when they seek him earnestly they shall not find him; but he will laugh at their calamity and mock when their fear cometh.* O blessed Jesus! didst thou weep over an incorrigible people in the days of thy flesh, (b) and wilt thou laugh at their miseries when thou comest to judge the world? didst thou shed thy precious blood to save them, and wilt thou mock at their destruction? didst thou woo and intreat and beseech sinners to be reconciled, and wilt thou not hear them when in the anguish of their souls, they cry unto thee? See then the mighty difference between Christ's coming as a Saviour and as a Judge, between the day of our salvation and the day of his wrath, between the joy in Heaven at the

(a) Prov. 1. 25, 26, 27.

(b) Luke 19. 41.

the conversion of penitent sinners, and at the confusion of the impenitent and unreclaimable. How terrible is the representation of God's wrath in the style of the Prophets, when he punisheth a people in this world for their sins? It is called,

(a) Isa. 13.

9, 34, 9.

(b) Mal. 4.

5.

Joel 2. 31.

(a) *the day of the Lord, cruel with wrath and fierce anger: the day of the Lord's vengeance.* (b) *The great and dreadful day of the Lord.* If it were thus, when

his wrath was kindled but a little, when mercy was mixed with his severity, what will it be, when he shall stir up all his wrath, and the heavens and the earth shall shake that never did offend him? what shall they then do that shall to their sorrow know how much they have displeased him? Then neither power, nor wit, nor eloquence, nor craft shall stand men in any stead; for the great Judge of that day can neither be over-awed by power, nor over-reached by wit, nor moved by eloquence, nor betrayed by craft, but every man shall receive according to his deeds. The mighty disturbers of mankind, who have been called *Conquerours*, shall not then be attended with their great armies, but must stand alone to receive their sentence: the greatest wits of the world will then find that a sincere honest

honest heart will avail them more than the deepest reach or the greatest subtilty; the most eloquent persons without true goodness will be like the man in the parable without the wedding garment, ^{Matt. 22. 12.} speechless; the most crafty and politick, will then see, that though they may deceive men and themselves too, yet *God will not be mocked, for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he reap*; and they who have spread snares for others and been hugely pleased to see them caught by them, shall then be convinced that they have laid the greatest of all for themselves; for *(a) God will then be fully known by the judgment which he shall execute, and the wicked shall be snared in the work of their own hands: for, the wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God.* ^{(a) Psal. 9. 16, 17.}

4. The terror of the sentence, which shall then be passed. That the Judge himself hath told us before hand what it shall be, to make us more apprehensive of it in this State, wherein we are capable to prevent it by sincere repentance and a holy life. The tenour of it is expressed in those dreadful words, *(b) depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* ^{(a) Matt. 25.}

It

It is impossible to conceive words fuller of horreur and amazement than those are, to such as duly consider the importance of them. It is true indeed, wicked men in this world are so little apprehensive of the misery *of departing from God*, that they are ready to bid God depart from them, and place no mean part of their felicity in keeping themselves at a distance from him. The true reason of which is, that while they pursue their lusts, the thoughts of God are disquieting to them; as no man that robs his neighbour loves to think of the Judge while he does it, not as though his condition were securer by it, but when men are not wise enough to prevent a danger, they are so great fools to count it their wisdom not to think of it. But therein lies a great part of the misery of another world, that men shall not be able to cheat and abuse themselves with false notions, and shews of happiness. The clouds they have embraced for Deities shall then vanish into smoke; all the satisfaction they ever imagined in their lusts shall be wholly gone, and nothing but the sad remembrance of them, left behind to torment them. All the Philosophy in the world will never make men understand their true happiness so much,

much, as one hours experience of another State will do: all men shall know better, but some shall be more happy and others more miserable by it. The righteous shall not only see God, but know what the seeing of God means, and that the greatest happiness we are capable of is implied therein; and the wicked shall not only be bid to depart from him, but shall then find that the highest misery imaginable is comprehended in it. It is a great instance of the weakness of our capacities here, that our discourses concerning the happiness and misery of a future life, are like those of Children about affairs of State, which they represent to themselves in a way agreeable to their own Childish fancies; thence the Poetical dreams of *Elysian* fields, and turning wheels, and rouling stones, and such like imaginations. Nay, the Scripture it self sets forth the joys and torments of another world in a way more suited to our fancy than our understanding; thence we read of *sitting down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*, to represent the happiness of that State, and of a *gnawing worm*, and a *devouring fire* and *blackness of darkness* to set forth the misery of it. But as the happiness of Heaven doth infinitely exceed the most lofty

lofty metaphors of Scripture, so doth the misery of Hell the most dreadful representation that can be made of it. Although a worm gnawing our entrails, and a fire consuming our outward parts be very sensible and moving metaphors, yet they cannot fully express the anguish and torment of the soul, which must be so much greater, as it is more active and sensible, than our bodies can be. Take a man that afflicts himself under the sense of some intolerable disgrace, or calamity befallen him; or that is oppressed with the guilt of some horrid wickedness, or sunk into the depth of despair; the Agonies and Torments of his Mind may make us apprehend the nature of that misery, although he falls short of the degrees of it. And were this misery to be of no long continuance, yet the terror of it must needs be great; but when *the worm shall never dye*, and *the fire shall never be quenched*, when insupportable misery shall be everlasting, nothing can then be added to the terrour of it: and this is as plainly contained in the sentence of wicked men, as any thing else is. But here men think they may justly *plead with God and talk with him of his judgments*; what proportion, say they, is there

there between the sins of this short life and the eternal misery of another? which objection is not so great in it self as it appears to be by the weak answers, which have been made to it; When to assign a proportion, they have made a strange kind of infinity in sin, either from the object, which unavoidably makes all sins equal, or from the wish of a sinner that he might have an eternity to sin in, which is to make the justice of God's punishments to be not according to their works, but to their wishes; But we need not strain things so much beyond what they will bear to vindicate God's Justice in this matter. Is it not thought just and reasonable among men, for a man to be confined to perpetual imprisonment for a fault he was not half an hour in committing? Nay do not all the Laws of the world make death the punishment of some crimes, which may be very suddenly done? And what is death, but the eternal depriving a man of all the comforts of life? And shall a thing then so constantly practised and universally justified in the world, be thought unreasonable when it is applyed to God? *It is true*, may some say, *if annihilation were all that was meant by eternal death, there could be no exception*

exception against it: but I ask, whether it would be unjust for the Laws of men to take away the lives of offenders in case their souls survive their bodies, and they be for ever sensible of the loss of life? if not, why shall not God preserve the honour of his Laws, and vindicate his Authority in governing the world, by sentencing obstinate sinners to the greatest misery, though their souls live for ever in the apprehension of it? Especially since God hath declared these things so evidently before-hand, and made them part of his Laws, and set everlasting life on the other side to ballance everlasting misery, and proposed them to a sinner's choice in such a manner, that nothing but contempt of God and his Grace, and wilful impenitency can ever betray men into this dreadful State of eternal destruction.

2. Thus much for the Argument used by the Apostle, *the terrour of the Lord*; I now come to the assurance he expresseth of the truth of it; *Knowing therefore the terrour of the Lord we perswade men.* We have two ways of proving Articles of Faith, such as this concerning Christ's coming to judgment is;

I. By

1. By shewing, that there is nothing unreasonable in the belief of them.

2. That there is sufficient evidence of the truth and certainty of them.

In the former of these it is of excellent use to produce the common apprehensions of mankind as to a future judgment, and the several arguments insisted on to that purpose; for if this were an unreasonable thing to believe, how come men without Revelation to agree about it as a thing very just and reasonable? If the conflagration of the world were an impossible thing, how came it to be so anciently received by the eldest and wisest Philosophers? How came it to be maintained by those two Sects which were *St. Paul's* enemies, when he preached at *Athens*, and always enemies to each other, the (a) *Epicureans* and the *Stoicks*? (a) *AG. 17.* It is true they made these conflagrations^{18.} to be periodical and not final: but we do not establish the belief of our doctrine upon their assertion, but from thence shew that is a most unreasonable thing to reject that as impossible to be done, which they assert hath been and may be often done. But for the truth and certainty of our doctrine, we build that upon no less a foundation than the word of God him-

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self. We may think a judgment to come reasonable in general upon the consideration of the goodness and wisdom and justice of God ; but all that depends upon this supposition, that God doth govern the world by Laws and not by Power, but since God himself hath declared it who is the Supreme Judge of the world,

(a) Ecclef.
12. 14.

(a) that he will bring every work into judgment whether it be good or evil, since the Son of God made this so great a part of his doctrine with all the circumstances of his own coming for again this end ; since he opened the commission he received from the Father for this purpose when he

(b) John
5. 22, 28,
29.

was upon earth, by declaring, that (b) the Father had committed all judgment to the Son, and that the hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation. Since this was

(c) Act. 17.
31.

so great a part of the Apostles doctrine to preach of this judgment to come, and (c) that God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance to all men in that he hath raised him from the dead : No

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wonder the Apostle speaks here with so great assurance of it, *knowing therefore, &c.* And no persons can have the least ground to question it, but such who wholly reject the Christian doctrine, upon the pretences of infidelity, which are so vain and trifling, that, were not their lusts stronger than their arguments men of wit would be ashamed to produce them; and did not mens passions overway their judgments it would be too much honour to them to confute them. But every Sermon is not intended for the conversion of Turks and Infidels, my design is to speak to those who acknowledge themselves to be *Christians* and to believe the truth of this doctrine upon the Authority of those divine persons who were particularly sent by God to reveal it to the world. And so I come to the last particular by way of application of the former, *viz.*

3. The efficacy of this argument for the perswading men to a reformation of heart and life; *knowing the terror of the Lord we perswade men.* For as another Apostle reasons from the same argument, (a) *Seeing all these things shall be dissolved* (a) 1 Pet. 3. 11. *what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?* There is

great variety of arguments in the Christian Religion to perswade men to holiness, but none more sensible and moving to the generality of mankind than this. Especially considering these two things;

1. That if this argument doth not perswade men, there is no reason to expect any other should.

2. That the condition of such persons is desperate, who cannot by any arguments be perswaded to leave off their sins.

1. There is no reason to expect any other argument should perswade men if this of the terror of the Lord do it not. If an almighty power cannot awaken us, if infinite justice cannot affright us, if a judgment to come cannot make us tremble, and eternal misery leave no impression upon us, what other arguments or methods can we imagine would reclaim us from our sins? We have been too sad an instance our selves, of the ineffectualness of other means of amendment by the mercies and judgments of this present life: have ever any people had a greater mixture of both these, than we have had in the compass of a few years? If the wisest persons in the world had been to have set down beforehand the method of reforming a sinful nation, they could have pitched

pitched upon none more effectual than what we have shewed not to be so. First, they would have imagined, that after enduring many miseries and hardships, when they were almost quite sunk under despair, if God should give them a sudden and unexpected deliverance, meer ingenuity and thankfulness would make them afraid to displease a God of so much kindness. But if so great a flash of joy and prosperity instead of that should make them grow wanton and extravagant, what course then so likely to reclaim them, as a series of smart and severe judgments one upon another, which might sufficiently warn yet not totally destroy. These we have had experience of, and of worse than all these, *viz.* that we are not amended by them. For are the Laws of God less broken, or the duties of Religion less contemned and despised after all these? What vices have been forsaken, what lusts have men been reclaimed from, nay what one sort of sin hath been less in fashion than before? Nay, have not their number as well as their aggravation, increased among us? Is our zeal for our established Religion greater? Is our faith more firm and settled, our devotion more constant, our Church less in danger of either of the

opposite factions than ever it was: Nay is it not rather like a neck of land between two rough and boisterous seas, which rise and swell, and by the breaches they make in upon us, threaten an inundation? By all which we see what necessity there is that God should govern this world by the considerations of another; that when neither judgments nor mercies can make men better in this life; judgment without mercy should be their portion in another. O the insatuating power of sin! when neither the pity of an indulgent Father, nor the frowns of a severe Judge can draw us from it: when neither the bitter passion of the Son of God for our sins, nor his threatening to come again to take vengeance upon us for them, can make us hate and abhor them: when neither the shame nor contempt, the diseases and reproaches which follow sin in this world, nor the intolerable anguish and misery of another can make men sensible of the folly of them so as to forsake them. Could we but represent to our minds that State wherein we must all shortly be, when the bustle and hurry, the pleasures and diversions, the courtships and entertainments of this world shall be quite at an end with us, and every one must give an account of himself

himself to God ; what another opinion of these things should we have in our minds, with what abhorrency should we look upon every temptation to sin, how should we loath the sight of those who either betrayed us into sin or flattered us when we had committed it ? Could men but ask themselves that reasonable question, why they will defie God by violating his known Laws, unless they be sure he either cannot or will not punish them for it ? they would be more afraid of doing it than they are, for supposing both, to do it, is perfect madness: to question his power who is Almighty, or his will who hath declared it and is immutable is the height of folly.

3. The condition of such is desperate whom no arguments can perswade to leave their sins. For there can be no breaking prison in that other State, no escaping tryal, no corrupting the Judge, no reversing the sentence, no pardon after judgment, no reprieve from punishment, no abatement or end of misery. How canst thou then hope, O impenitent sinner, either to fly from or to endure that wrath of God that is coming swiftly upon thee to arrest thee by death, and convey thee to thy tormenting prison? canst

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thou hope, that God will discharge thee before that dreadful day comes, when he hath confined thee thither in order to it? Canst thou hope that day will never come which the vindication of God's Justice, the honour of Christ, the happiness of the blessed, as well as the punishment of the wicked make so necessary that it should come? or canst thou hope to defend thy self against an all-seeing eye, a most righteous Judge and an accusing conscience when that day doth come? when all the mercies thou hast abused, the judgements thou hast slighted, the motions of grace thou hast resisted, the checks of conscience thou hast stifled, and the sins of all kinds thou hast committed, shall rise up in judgment to condemn thee? O that we had all the wisdom to consider of these things in time, that the terror of the Lord may perswade us to break off all our sins by a sincere repentance, and to live so that we may dye with comfort, and be for ever with the Lord in his eternal Joy.

S. E. R.

SERMON XII.

Preached at

WHITE-HALL.

FEBRUARY 18th. 1672.

Matthew XVI. 26.

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall he give in exchange for his soul?

IF we look into the twenty fourth verse of this Chapter we shall find our Saviour there laying down such hard conditions of mens being his Disciples, as were, to all appearance, more likely to have driven away those which he had already, than to have drawn any others after him: For he requires no less than the greatest readiness
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to suffer for his sake, and that to no manner a degree than the loss of what is most precious to men in this world, in their lives; which is implied in those words; *If any man will come after me let him deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow me*: If our Saviour had only designed to have made himself great by the number of his followers, if he had intended a Kingdom in this world, as the Jews imagined, he would have made more easie conditions of being his Disciples; He would have chosen another way to have attained his end, and made use of more pleasing and popular arguments to have perswaded the people to follow him. When the Eastern Impostor afterwards began to set up for a new Religion, he took a method as contrary to our Saviours as his Religion and design was: he knew the Greatness and Honour, the pleasure, and the pomp of this world, were the things most passionately loved and admired by the generality of mankind; and therefore he fitted his Religion to the natural inclinations of men, and proposed such means of advancing it as were most like to make men great by undertaking them. And men are never so willing to be cheated by any Religion, as
that

that which complies with their present interests and gratifies their sensual inclinations. In this case there need not many arguments to court persons to embrace that which they were so strongly inclined to before; and the very name of Religion does them great service when it allows what they most desire, and makes them sin with a quiet Conscience.

But that is the peculiar honour of Christianity, that as it can never be suspected to be a design for this world, so it hath risen and spread it self by ways directly contrary to the Splendor and Greatness of it: For it overcame by sufferings, increased by persecutions, and prevailed in the world by the patience and self-denial of its followers. He that was the first Preacher of it, was the greatest example of suffering himself; and he bids his Disciples not to think much of following their Lord and Saviour though it were *to take up the Cross* and lay down their lives for his sake. We may easily imagine how much startled and surprized his Disciples were at such discourses as these, who being possessed with the common opinion of the temporal Kingdom of the Messiah, came to him with great expectations of honour and advancement
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by him; and no less would content some of them, than being his highest Favourites and Ministers of State, *sitting at his right hand, and at his left hand in his Kingdom*: they had already in their imaginations shared the preferments and dignities of his Kingdom among themselves; and were often contending about preheminance, *who should be the greatest among them*. Inſomuch, that when Chriſt now, the time of his ſuffering approaching, began more plainly to diſcourſe to them of *his own ſufferings at Hieruſalem*, v. 21. St. Peter, either out of his natural forwardneſs and heat, or being elevated by the good opinion which our Lord had expreſſed of him before, v. 17. takes upon him very ſolemnly to rebuke him for ever thinking to ſubmit himſelf to ſo mean a condition; *Be it far from thee, Lord; this ſhall not be unto thee*, v. 22. upon which, Jeſus not only reproves Peter with great ſmartneſs and ſeverity, as favouring more of the pomp and eaſe of the world, than of the nature and deſign of his Kingdom; v. 23. but takes this occaſion to tell his Diſciples, that they muſt no longer dream of the Glories and Splendor of this world, nor entertain themſelves with vain Fancies of the Pleaſures

tures and contentments of this life ; but if they would shew themselves to be truly his Disciples they must prepare for Persecutions and Martyrdoms, they must value their Religion above their lives; for the time was now coming on, they must part with one or the other; and if they were not prepared before-hand by self-denial and taking up the Cross, they would run great hazard of losing their souls for the love of this world: and therefore our Saviour shews,

1. The great advantage that would accrue to them, if they were willing to suffer for his sake. *Whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it, v. 25. i. e.* instead of this short and uncertain life, which would spend it self in a little time, he should have one infinitely more valuable; and therefore no exchange could be better made, than that of laying down such a life as this for one of eternal Happiness and Glory; for so our Saviour elsewhere explains it, *He that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal, St. Joh. 12. 25.*

2. The great folly of losing this eternal state of happiness for the preservation of this present life, or the enjoyment of the things of this world: which he first lays

lays down a certain truth, v. 25. *For whosoever shall save his life shall lose it,* and then discovers the folly of it in the words of the text, by comparing such a mans gain and his loss together, supposing he should obtain the utmost that can be hoped for in this world. *For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

Wherein we may consider these three particulars;

1. The possibility supposed of losing the soul; though a man should gain the whole world.

2. The hazard implied of the loss of the soul for the sake of the gain of the world.

3. The folly expressed of losing the soul, though it be for the gain of the whole world.

1. The possibility supposed of the loss of the soul in another world; For the force of our Saviours argument depends wholly on the supposition of the certainty of the souls Being in another state; and its capacity of happiness or misery therein. For, setting that aside there can be no argument strong enough to persuade any man to part not only with what

what he hath or hopes for in this life, but with life it self. He that is so great a Fool to be an Atheist, would yet be much more so to be a Martyr for his opinion. What is there could recompence the loss of life, to a man that believes that there is nothing after it? But supposing there should be a life to come, as it is impossible to give any demonstration to the contrary, what madness would it be, for a man to run himself into the miseries of another world with a design to prove there is none? If all that our Saviour had meant, were only to represent the folly of a person, that would lay down his life for the purchase of an estate, (for so the soul is often taken for the life) that would not have reached the scope and design of his discourse. And no instances can be produced of such a kind of folly, which would be as great as for a man to lose his head for a wager, or to purchase the lease of his life by destroying himself. But supposing this to be a Proverbial speech, yet the folly of losing a mans life for the gain of the whole world is not brought in by our Saviour meerly for it self: but as it doth much more represent the unspeakable folly of such who for the love
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of this world will venture the loss of an eternal life, and enduring all the misery which is consequent upon it. If that man would gain nothing by his bargain but the reputation of a Fool, that for the possession of the whole world for one moment, would be content to be killed in the next ; how much greater folly are they guilty of, that for the sake of this world and the preservation of their lives here, expose themselves to all the miseries of another life, which God hath threatned or their souls can undergo? It is such a loss of the soul which is here spoken of, as is consistent with the preservation of this present life; *for whosoever, saith Christ, will save his life shall lose it*; and to those words before, those of the text have a particular reference, and therefore must be understood not of losing this life, but of the loss of the Soul in a future state.

And this loss cannot be understood of the souls annihilation or ceasing to be, as soon as the life is gone; for that being supposed, he would be the happiest man that had the most of this world at his command and enjoyed the greatest pleasure in it. So St. *Paul* himself determines, that if there were no future state, the Epicureans

Epicureans argument would take place,

(a) *Let us eat and drink for to morrow we* (a) 1 Cor. 15. 32.
die : and he reckons those among the

most miserable of all mankind who ventured the loss of all that is accounted desirable in this world and of their lives too, if there were not a better life to come.

(b) *For if in this life only we have* (b) 1 Cor. 15. 19.
hope in Christ, saith he, we are of all men
the most miserable. So that the strength

of our Saviour's discourse depends upon the supposition of the immortality of the soul, and its capacity of being happy or miserable in a future state.

And it is the great commendation of the Christian Religion, that the particular duties required in it are established on the same Foundations that natural Religion is, which are the belief of a Deity and the immortality of the Soul. (c) *For* (c) Heb.

he that comes unto God must believe that 11. 6.

he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek him ; which being spoken with a respect to one who for being good was translated out of this world, must refer to the rewards of a future life. And we desire no more than these common principles of Religion to make the most difficult duties of Christianity appear reasonable to mankind. For it is upon the

account of this future state of the soul, that it is our most just and necessary care to look after the welfare of our souls in the first place, *to seek the Kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof*, before the concerns of this present life, because a state that endures for ever ought to be preferred before a short and uncertain abode in this world. It is this, which makes it reasonable to please God, though to the displeasing our selves and the crossing our natural inclinations; because eternal happiness and misery depends upon his favour or displeasure. It is this, which obliges men to the greatest care of their actions, because their future state in another world, will be according to their lives here, for *every man shall then receive according to his works*. It is this, which ought to keep men from all fleshly lusts, not meerly because they are inconvenient for their bodies, but *because they war against their souls*. It is this, which makes the love of this world so dangerous a thing, because it draws away the hearts and affections of men from things which are above and fixes them upon things below. It is this, which make it necessary for us to subdue our passions, to conquer temptations, to forgive injuries, to be patient

patient under afflictions, and to lay down our lives for Religion, because *there will be a reward for the righteous*, and the happiness of another state will make abundant recompence for all the difficulties of this.

So that in the Gospel the doctrine of the souls immortality is not spoken of as the nice speculation of subtile and contemplative men; nor meerly suposed as a foundation of all Religion, but it is interwoven in the substance of it, and adds strength to all its parts. For herein we find the immortality of the soul not barely asserted, nor proved by uncertain arguments, nor depending on the opinion of Philosophers; but delivered with the greatest authority, revealed with the clearest light, and confirmed by the strongest evidence. If any one can make known to mankind the state of souls in another world it must be God himself; if ever it was made known plainly by him it must be in the Gospel, whereby *(a) life and immortality are brought to light*; if ever any arguments were proper to convince mankind of it, they are such as are contained therein. For it is not barely the resurrection of our Lord, which is a manifest evidence of the truth

(a) 2 Tim.
1. 10.

of the souls subsisting after a real death; but the whole design of his doctrine and the Christian Religion is built upon it. So that if we suppose the immortality of the soul the Christian Religion appears more reasonable by it; but if we suppose the doctrine of Christ to be true there can be no doubt left of the immortality of the soul; and whatever arguments we have to prove the truth of this doctrine by, the same do of necessity prove the certainty of the souls immortality.

I confess many subtle arguments have been used by those who never knew any thing of divine revelation to prove the soul to be of such a nature, that it was not capable of dying with the body; and some of them such as none of their Adversaries were ever able to answer. For the most common acts of sense are unaccountable in a meer Mechanical way; and after all the attempts of the most wit and industrious men I despair of ever seeing the powers of meer matter raised to a capacity of performing the lowest acts of perception; and much more of those nobler faculties of memory, under-

understanding and will. But although the arguments from hence are sufficient to justify the belief of the souls immortality to all considering men; yet the far greatest part of mankind was never so; and a matter of so great consequence as this is, ought to be proposed in the most plain, most certain, and most effectual manner.

While these disputes were managed among the Philosophers of old, though those who asserted the immortality of the soul had the better reason of their side; yet their Adversaries spake with greater confidence; and that always bears the greatest sway among injudicious people. And some men are always fond of a reputation for wit by opposing common opinions though never so true and useful: especially when they serve a bad end in it, and do thereby plead for their own impieties. But it cannot be denied, that those who were in the right did likewise give too great advantage to their enemies, partly by their own diffidence and distrust of what they had contended for, partly from the too great niceness and subtilty of their arguments, partly from the ridiculous fopperies which they maintained together with that of the souls immortality,

mortality, as the transmigration of them into the bodies of Brutes and such like. But the main disadvantage of all to the world was, that the immortality of the soul was rather insisted on as a Principle of Philosophy than of Religion. Some of the best of their arguments were such as made the souls of Brutes immortal as well as those of men ; and those could not be imagined to have any great force on the lives of men, which would equally hold for such creatures which were not capable of rewards and punishments in another life. But therein lies the great excellency of the doctrine of the souls immortality as it is discovered in the Gospel, not only that it comes from him who best understands the nature of souls, but is delivered in such a manner as is most effectual for the reformation of mankind. For the fullest account herein given of it is by the rewards and punishments of another life ; and those not Poetically described by Fictions and Romances ; but delivered with the plainness of truth, the gravity of a Law, the severity of a Judge, the authority of a Law-giver, the Majesty of a Prince, and the wisdom of a Deity. Wherein the happiness described is such as the most excellent

lent minds think it most desirable ; and the misery so great as all that consider it, must think it most intolerable. And both these are set forth with so close a respect to the actions of this life, that every one must expect in another world, according to what he doth in this.

How is it then possible that the doctrine of the souls being in another state, could be recommended with greater advantage to mankind, than it is in the Gospel ? and what is there can be imagined to take off the force of this, but the proving an absolute incapacity in the soul of subsisting after death ? It is true, indeed in the state of this intimate union and conjunction between the soul and body, they do suffer mutually from each other. But if the souls suffering on the account of the body, as in diseases of the brain, be sufficient to prove there is no soul ; why may not the bodies suffering on the account of the soul, as in violent passions of the mind, as well prove that there is no body ? It is not enough then to prove that the soul doth in some things suffer from the body ; (for so doth the Child in the Mothers womb from the distempers of its Mother, yet very capable of living when separated from her) but

it must be shewed that the soul is not distinct from the body to prove it incapable of being without it.

But on the other side, I shall now shew that there is nothing unreasonable in what the Scripture delivers concerning the immortal state of the Souls of men, as to future rewards and punishments, because there are those things now in them considered as distinct from their bodies, which make them capable of either of them. And those are,

1. That they are capable of pleasure and pain distinct from the body.

2. That they have power of determining their own actions.

1. That the souls of men are capable of pleasure and pain distinct from the pleasure and pain of the body. Wherever pleasure and pain may be, there must be a capacity of rewards and punishments, for a reward is nothing but the heightning of pleasure, and punishment an increase of pain; And if there be both these in men of which no account can be given from their bodies, there must be a nobler principle within, which we call the Soul, which is both the cause and the subject of them.

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We may as easily imagine that a Fox should leave his prey to find out a demonstration in *Euclid*, or a Serpent attempt the squaring of the circle in the dust, or all the Fables of *Æsop* to become real Histories, and the Birds and Beasts turn Wits and Politicians, as be able to give an account of those we call pleasures of the mind from the affections of the body. The transport of joy which *Archimedes* was in at the finding out his desired *Problem*, was a more certain evidence of the real pleasures of the mind, than the finding it was of the greatness of his wit. Could we ever think that men who understood themselves would spend so much time in lines, and numbers, and figures, and examining Problems and Demonstrations which depend upon them, if they found not a great delight and satisfaction in the doing of it? But whence doth this pleasure arise? not from seeing the figures, or meer drawing the lines, or calculating the numbers, but by deducing the just and necessary consequences of one thing from another; which would afford no more pleasure to a man without his soul, than a Book of *Geometry* would give to a Herd of Swine. It is the Soul alone which takes pleasure in the

the search and finding out such Truths, which can have no kind of respect to the Body; it is that, which can put the Body out of order with its own pleasures, by spending so much time in contemplation as may exhaust the Spirits, abate the vigour of the Body and hasten its decay. And while that droops and sinks under the burden, the Soul may be as vigorous and active in such a consumptive state of the Body as ever it was before; the understanding as clear, the memory as strong, the entertainments of the mind as great, as if the Body were in perfect health. It is a greater and more manly pleasure, which some Men take in searching into the nature of these things in the world than others can take in the most voluptuous enjoyment of them; the one can only satisfy a brutish appetite, while, it may be, something within is very unquiet and troublesom; but the other brings a solid pleasure to the mind without any regret or disturbance from the Body. By this we see, that setting aside the consideration of Religion, the mind of man is capable of such pleasures peculiar to it self, of which no account could be given, if there were not a spiritual and therefore immortal Being

ing within us, not only distinct from the body, but very far above it. But the very capacity of Religion in mankind doth yet further evidence the truth of it. I would fain understand how men ever came to be abused with the notion of Religion, as some men are willing to think they are, if there were not some faculties in them above those of sense and imagination? For where we find nothing else but these, we see an utter incapacity of any such thing as Religion is; in some brute creatures we find great subtilty and strange imitations of reason; but we can find nothing like Religion among them. How should it come to be otherwise among men, if imagination were the highest faculty in man; since the main principles of Religion are as remote from the power of imagination as may be? What can be thought more repugnant to all the conceptions we take in by our senses, than the conception of a Deity and the future State of Souls is? How then come the impressions of these things to sink so deep into humane nature, that all the art and violence in the world can never take them out? The strongest impressions upon all other Beings are such as are suitable to their natures, how come those
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those in mankind to be such as must be supposed to be not only above but contrary to them if an immortal soul be not granted? If men had no principle within them beyond that of sense, nothing would have been more easie, than to have shaken off the notion of a Deity and all apprehension of a future State: But this hath been so far from easie, that it is a thing utterly impossible to be done: all the wit and arts, all the malice and cruelty, all the racks and torments that could yet be thought on could not alter mens perswasions of the Christian Religion, much less raze out the Foundations of Natural Religion in the world. But what imaginable account can be given of the joys and pleasures, which the Martyrs of old expressed under the most exquisite torments of their bodies; if their minds were not of a far nobler and diviner nature than their bodies were? Although a natural stupidity and dulness of temper may abate the sense of pain, although an obstinate resolution may keep men from complaining of it; yet, not only to bear the Cross but to embrace it; to be not only patient but pleasant under tortures; nay, to sing with greater joy in the flames than others do when they
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are heated with wine, doth not only shew that there is something within us capable of pleasure distinct from the Body, but that the pleasures of it may be so great as to swallow up the pains of the body. But I need not have recourse to such great and extraordinary instances, (although sufficiently attested by such who saw and heard them) for every good man hath that inward pleasure in being and doing good, which he would not part with for all the greatest Epicurism in the world. And where there is, or may be so great pleasure, no wonder if there be likewise a sense of pain proportionable to it; witness those gripes and tortures of Conscience which wicked men undergo from the reflection upon themselves; when their own evil actions fill them with horror and amazement, when the cruelties they have used to others return with greater violence upon their own minds, when the unlawful pleasures of the body prove the greatest vexation to their souls, and the weight of their evil actions sinks them under despair and the dreadful apprehensions of future misery. These are things we need not search Histories, or cite ancient Authors for; every man's own Conscience will

will tell him, if he hath not lost all sense of good and evil; that as there is a real pleasure in doing good, there is the greatest inward pain in doing evil. Having thus shewed that the soul of man is capable of pleasure and pain in this present state distinct from the body, it thence follows, that it is capable of rewards and punishments, when it shall be separated from it.

2. That the souls of men have a power of determining their own actions; without which there could be no reasonable account given of the rewards and punishments of another life. Were I to prove liberty in man from the supposition of Religion I know no argument more plain or more convincing than that which is drawn from the consideration of future rewards and punishments: but being now to prove a capacity of rewards and punishments from the consideration of Liberty, I must make use of other means to do it by. And what can be imagined greater evidence in Beings capable of reflecting upon themselves, than the constant sense and experience of all mankind? Not that all men are agreed in their opinions about these things; (for even herein men shew their liberty,
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by resisting the clearest evidence to prove it) but that every man finds himself free in the determining his moral actions. And therefore he hath the same reason to believe this, which he hath of his own Being or Understanding. For what other way hath a man to know that he understands himself or any thing else, but the sense of his own mind? and those who go about to persuade men that they think themselves free when they are not, may in the next place persuade them that they think they understand when they do not. Nay, they might hope in the first place to persuade men out of their Understandings, for we are not so competent judges of the more necessary and natural acts, for men understand whether they will or no, as of the more free and voluntary; for in this case every man can when he pleases put a trial upon himself, and like the confuting the arguments against motion by moving, can shew the folly of all the pleas for fatal necessity by a freedom of action. But if once this natural liberty be taken away, wisdom and folly as well as vice and vertue would be names invented to no purpose; no men can be said to be better or wiser than others, if their actions

ons do not depend on their own choice and consideration, but on a hidden train of causes which it is no more in a man's power to hinder than in the earth to hinder the falling of rain upon it. If therefore sense and reason may prevail upon mankind, not to fancy themselves under invisible chains and fetters, of which they can have no evidence or experience; we may thence infer the soul's capacity of rewards and punishments in another life, since happiness and misery are set before them, and it must be their own voluntary choice which brings them to either of them: When either by their own folly they run themselves upon everlasting ruine, or by making use of the assistance of divine grace they become capable of endless Joy. But since men have not only a power of governing themselves, but are capable of doing it by considerations as remote from the things of sense as Heaven is from Earth; it is not conceivable there should be such a power within us, if there were not an immortal soul which is the subject of it. For what is there that hath the shadow of liberty in meer matter? what is there of these inferiour creatures that can act by consideration of future things, but only

only man? Whence comes man to consider but from his reason? or to guide himself by the consideration of future and eternal things, but from an immortal principle within him; which alone can make things at a distance to be as present; can represent to it self the infinite pleasures and unconceivable misery of an eternal state in such a manner as to direct the course of this present life in order to the obtaining of the one and avoiding of the other. And thus much concerning the supposition here made of the loss of the soul, and its immortality implied therein.

I come to consider the hazard of losing the soul for the gain of this world. For although our Saviour puts the utmost supposable case, the better to represent the folly of losing the soul for the sake of the world; yet he doth imply the danger may be as great, although a man's ambition never comes to be so extravagant, as to aim at the possession of the whole world. The whole world can never make amends for the loss of the soul; yet the soul may be lost for a very inconsiderable part of it; although all the wealth and treasures of the *Indies* can never compensate to a man the loss of his

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life, yet that may be in as great danger of losing upon far easier terms than those are. It is not to be thought that those whom our Saviour speaks to, could ever propose such vast designs to themselves as the Empire of the whole world was; but, he tells them, if that could be supposed, it were far more desirable to save a soul than to gain the world, yet such is the folly of mankind to lose their souls for a very small share of this present world. For the temptations of this world are so many, so great, so pleasing to mankind, and the love of life so natural and so strong, that inconsiderate men will run any hazard of their souls for the gain of one or preservation of the other. The highest instance of this kind is that which our Saviour here intends, when men will make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience to escape the danger of their lives; or with *Judas* will betray their Saviour for some present gain although very far short of that of the whole world. And if I be not much mistaken, it is upon this account, that our Saviour pronounces it so hard (a) *for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*, because in such difficult times of persecution on the account of Religion as those were,

(a) Matth.

19. 23, 24.

Mark 10.

24. 25.

Luke 18.

24, 25.

were, such men would be shrewdly tempted to venture the loss of their souls in another world rather than of their estates in this. For it was the young man's unwillingness to part with his great possessions to follow Christ, which gave him occasion to utter that hard saying. It is on this account St. Paul saith, *(a) the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some have coveted after they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows:* It was on this account, *(b) that Demas forsook Paul, having loved this present world:* and that *(c) the friendship of this world is said to be enmity with God,* and that our Saviour saith, *(d) no man can serve two Masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other; else he will hold to the one and despise the other; ye cannot serve God and Mammon.* which doth suppose that these two doth require two contrary things at the same time; for if a hundred Masters did all require the same thing, a man might, in doing that, be said to serve them all. But when Religion requires that we must part with all for that, and the world requires that we must part with Religion to preserve our interest in it, then it is impossible to serve

God and Mammon together; for we must hold to the one and despise the other.

But what then? Is there no danger of the loss of the soul for the sake of this world, but only in the case of persecution? then, some may say, *we hope there is no fear now of mens being too rich to go to Heaven.* Thanks be to God that we live in times free from such dangerous tryals as those of persecution are, and wherein men may quietly enjoy their Estates, and the best Religion in the world together: but although there be no danger of splitting upon the rocks, there may be of sinking with being overcharged or springing too great a leak within us, whereby we let in more than we can be able to bear. And supposing the most prosperous and easie condition men can fancy to themselves here; yet the things of this world are so great occasions of evil, so great hindrances of good, that on these accounts men always run a mighty hazard of their souls for the sake of this world. The Devil knew well enough where his greatest strength lay, when he reserved the (a) temptation of the glories of this world to the last place in dealing with Christ himself; when
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(a) Matt.
4. 8, 9.

nothing else would prevail upon him, he was yet in hopes that the Greatness and Splendour of this world would bring him to his terms. And surely if the Devil had not a mighty opinion of the power of these charms of *the Kingdoms and Glory of this world*, he would never have put such hard terms to them which were no less than *falling down and worshipping him*: which we do not find he ever durst so much as mention before till he held this bait in his hand. And although our Saviour baffled him in this his strongest temptation, yet he still finds, that far less than what he here offered, will bring men in subjection to him. How small a matter of gain will tempt some men to all the sins of lying, of fraud and injustice? who pawn their souls and put them out at interest for a very small present advantage, although they are sure in a very little time to lose both their Interest and the Principal too.

How many, for the sake of *the Honours and Preferments of this World*, are willing to do by their Consciences as the *Indian* did by his Letter, lay them aside till their business be done and then expect to hear no more of them! What poor and trifling things in this World,

do men continually venture their souls for? As though all were clear gains which they could put off so dead a commodity as the Salvation of their Souls for. How apt are such to applaud themselves for their own skill, when meerly by a little swearing, and lying, and cheating, things which cost them nothing but a few words, they can defeat the designs of their Enemies and compass their own! But how low is the rate of Souls fallen in the esteem of such persons as these are! If they had not been of any greater value, they had not been worth any ordinary man's, much less, the Son of God's laying down his life for the redemption of them. Is this all the requital men make him for the travail of his Soul, the wounds of his Body, the bitterness of his Passion, to squander away those Souls upon any trifling advantages of this world, which he shed his most precious blood for the redemption of? Whenever men are tempted to sin with the hopes of gain, let them but consider how much they undervalue not only their own Souls, but the eternal Son of God, and all that he hath done and suffered for the sake of the Souls of men: If there had been no greater worth

worth in our Souls, silver and gold would have been a sufficient price of redemption for them (for if men lose their Souls for these things, it is a sign they set a higher value upon them.) But God's justice was not to be bribed, his wrath against sin was not to be appeased by the greatest riches of this World, nothing but the inestimable blood of Christ would be accepted for the purchase of Souls; and when they are so dearly bought must they be cast away upon such trifles as the riches and honours of this World are, in comparison with them?

These are men who lose their Souls upon design, but there are others so prodigal of them, that they can play and sport them away, or lose them only because it is the custom to do so. With whom all the reasons and arguments in the world cannot prevail to leave off their sins, if it once be accounted a fashion to commit them. Yea, so dangerous things are fashionable vices, that some will seem to be worse than they are, (although few continue long Hypocritical in that way) that they might not be out of the fashion, and some will be sure to follow it (if not out-do it) though to the eternal ruine of their Souls. But

although all damn'd persons at the great day will be confounded and ashamed, yet none will be more ridiculously miserable than such who go to Hell for fashion-sake. What a strange account would this be at the dreadful day of judgment for any to plead for themselves, that they knew that chastity, temperance, sobriety and devotion were things more pleasing to God, but it was grown a Mode to be vicious, and they had rather be damned than be out of the fashion? The most charitable opinion we can have of such persons now, is, that they do not think they have any Souls at all; for it is prodigious folly for men to believe they have Souls that are immortal, and yet be so regardless of them.

Yet these who are vicious out of compliance are not the only persons who shew so little care of their Souls, what shall we say to those who enjoying the good things of this life, scarce ever do so much as think of another? Who are very solicitous about every little mode of attire for their bodies, and think no time long enough to be spent in the grand affairs of dressing and adorning their out-sides; but from one end of the year to the other never spend one serious thought

thought about eternity, or the future state of their souls. Their utmost contrivances are how to pass away their days with the greatest ease and pleasure to themselves ; and never consider what will become of their souls when they come to die. Alas poor immortal souls ! are they become the only contemptible things men have about them ? All care is little enough with some for the body, for the pampering and indulging of that, and making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof ; but any cure is thought too much for the soul ; and no time passes so heavily away, as the hours of devotion do. The very shew of Religion is looked on as a burden, what then do they think of the practice of it ? The Devil himself shews a greater esteem of the souls of men, than such persons do ; for he hath been always very active and industrious in seeking their ruin, but is ready enough to comply with all the inclinations of the body, or mens designs in this world ; nay he makes the greatest use of these as the most powerful temptations for the ruin of their souls ; by all which it is evident, that, being our greatest enemy, he aims only at the ruin of that which is
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of greatest value and consideration, and that is the thing so much despised by wicked men, *viz.* the soul. These do in effect, tell the Devil he may spare his pains in tempting them; they can do his work fast enough themselves, and destroy their own souls without any help from him. And if all men were so bent upon their own ruin, the Devil would have so little to do, that he must find out some other imployment besides that of tempting to divert himself with, unless it be the greatest diversion of all to him, to see men turned Devils to themselves. But are the temptations of this world so infatuating that no reason or consideration can bring men to any care of or regard to their souls? we have no ground to think so, since there have been and I hope still are such, who can despise the glittering vanities, the riches and honours, the pleasures and delights of this world when they stand in competition with the eternal happiness of their souls in a better world. And that not out of a sullen humour or a morose temper, or a discontented mind; but from the most prudent weighing and ballancing the gain of this world and the loss of the soul together. *For what is a man profited*

ted if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul, or what shall he give in exchange for his soul.

3. Which is the last particular, to represent the folly of losing the soul, though it were for the gain of the whole world. Which will appear by comparing the gain and the loss with each other in these Four things.

1. The gain here proposed is at the best but possible to one ; but the hazard of losing the soul is certain to all. And what folly is it for men to run themselves upon so great and certain danger, for so uncertain gain, which never any man yet attained to, or is like to do it ? our Saviour knew how hard a matter it was to set any bounds to the ambitious thoughts or the covetous designs of men : every step the ambitious man takes higher gives him the fairer prospect before him ; it raises his thoughts, enlarges his desires, puts new projects into his mind, which like the circles of water spread still farther and farther, till his honour and he be both laid in the dust together : The covetous person is never satisfied with what he enjoys, the more he gets, still the more he hopes for ; and like the grave whither he is going, is always devouring

vouring and always craving : Yet neither of these can be thought so vain as to propose no less to themselves than the Empire or riches of the whole world. But our Saviour allows them the utmost, that ever can be supposed as to mens designs for this world ; let men be never so ambitious or covetous, they could desire no more than all the world ; though they would have all this, yet this all would never make amends for the loss of the Soul. It is a thing possible , that one person might by degrees bring the whole world in subjection to him, but it is possible in so remote a degree that no man in his wits can be thought to design it. How small a part of the inhabited world have the greatest Conquerours been able to subdue ! and if the *Macedonian* Prince was ever so vain to weep that he had no more worlds to conquer, he gave others a just occasion to laugh at so much Ignorance which made him think he had conquered this. And to put a check to such a troublesome ambition of disturbing the world in others, how early was he taken away in the midst of his

his vast thoughts and designs? What a small thing would the compass of the whole earth appear to one that should behold it at the distance of the fixed stars? and the mighty Empires which have made the greatest noise in the world have taken up but an inconsiderable part of the whole earth. What are then those mean designs which men continually hazard their souls for as much as if they aimed at the whole world? For we are not to imagine that only Kings and Princes are in any hazard of losing their souls for the sake of this world; for it is not the greatness of mens condition, but their immoderate love to the world which ruins and destroys their souls. And Covetousness and ambition do not always reign in Courts and Palaces, they can stoop to the meanness of a Cottage, and ruin the souls of such as want the things of this world as well as those that enjoy them. So that no state or condition of men is exempt from the hazard of losing the soul for the love of this world, although but one person can be supposed at once to have the possession of the whole world.

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2. The gain of this world brings but an imaginary happiness, but the loss of the soul a most real misery. It is easie to suppose a person to have the whole world at his command and not himself; and how can that man be happy that is not at his own command? The cares of Government in a small part of the earth are so great and troublesome, that by the consent of mankind the managers of it are invested with more than ordinary priviledges by way of recompence for them; but what are these to the solicitous thoughts, the continual fears, the restless employments, the uninterrupted troubles which must attend the gain of the whole world? So that after all the success of such a mans designs, he may be farther off from any true contentment than he was at the beginning of them. And in that respect mens conditions seem to be brought to a greater equality in the world, because those who enjoy the most of the world do oft-times enjoy the least of themselves; which hath made some great Emperours lay down their Crowns and Scepters to enjoy themselves in the retirements of a Cloyster or a Garden. All the real happiness of
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this world lies in a contented mind, and that we plainly see doth not depend upon mens outward circumstances ; for some men may be much farther from it in a higher condition in this world, than others are, or it may be themselves have been, in a far lower. But if mens happiness did arise from any thing without them, that must be always agreeable to their outward condition ; but we find great difference as to mens contentment in equal circumstances, and many times much greater in a private State of life, than in the most publick capacity. By which it appears, that whatever looks like happiness in this world, depends upon a mans soul, and not upon the gain of the world ; nay it is only from thence that ever men are able to abuse themselves with false notions and *Idea's* of happiness here. But none of those shall go into another world with them ; farewell then to all imaginary happiness ; to the pleasures of sin, and the cheats of a deceitful world ; then nothing but the dreadful apprehensions of its own misery shall possess that soul which shall then too late discern its folly, and lament it when it is past recovery. Then the torments of the mind shall

shall never be imputed to melancholy vapours, or a disordered fancy. There will be no drinking away sorrows, no jesting with the sting of conscience, no playing with the flames of another world. God will then no longer be mocked by wicked men, but they shall find to their own eternal horror and confusion, that *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* He neither wants power to inflict, nor justice to execute, nor vengeance to pursue, nor wrath to punish; but his power is irresistible, his justice inflexible, and his wrath is insupportable. Consider now O foolish sinner that hast hitherto been ready to cast away thy soul upon the pleasures of sin for a season, what a wise exchange thou wilt make of a poor imaginary happiness for a most real and intollerable misery. What will all the gain of this world signifie in that State whither we are all hastening apace? What contentment will it be to thee then to think of all those bewitching vanities, which have betrayed thy soul into unspeakable misery? Wouldst thou be willing to be treated with all the ceremonies of State and Greatness for an hour or two, if thou wert sure that immediately

diately after thou must undergo the most exquisite tortures and be racked and tormented to death? When men neglect their souls and cast them away upon the sinful pleasures and gains of this world, it is but such a kind of airy and phantastical happiness; but the miseries of a lost soul are infinitely beyond the racks and torments of the body. It hath sometimes happened that the horror of despair hath seized upon mens minds for some notorious crimes in this life, which hath given no rest either to body or mind, but the violence of the inward pains have forced them to put an end to this miserable life; as in the case of *Judas*. But if the expectation of future misery be so dreadful, what must the enduring of it be? Of all the ways of dying we can hardly imagine any more painful or full of horror than that of sacrificing their Children to *Molock* was among the *Canaanites*, and Children of *Amon* where the Children were put into the body of a Brass Image and a fire made under it, which by degrees with lamentable shrieks and cryings roasted them to death; yet this above all others in the New Testament is chosen as the fittest representation of the miseries of another world,

and thence the very name of *Gehenna* is taken. But as the joys of heaven will far surpass all the pleasure which the mind of a good man hath in this life ; so will the torments of Hell as much exceed the greatest miseries of this world.

But in the most exquisite pains of the body there is that satisfaction still left, that death will at last put an end to them ; but that is a farther discovery of the unspeakable folly of losing the soul for the sake of this world, that

3. The happiness of this world can last but for a little time, but the misery of the soul will have no end. Suppose a man had all the world at his command, and enjoyed as much satisfaction in it as it was possible for humane nature to have ; yet the very thoughts of dying and leaving all in a short time, must needs make his happiness seem much less considerable to him. And every wise man would provide most for that State wherein he is sure to continue longest. The shortness of life makes the pleasures of it less desirable, and the miseries less dreadful : but an endless State makes every thing of moment which belongs to it. Where there is variety and liberty of change, there is
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no necessity of any long deliberation before-hand, but for that which is to continue always the same the greatest consideration is needful, because the very continuance of some things is apt to bring weariness and satiety with it. If a man were bound for his whole lifetime to converse only with one person without so much as seeing any other, he would desire time and use his best judgment in the choice of him. If one were bound to lie in the same posture without any motion but for a month together, how would he imploy his wits before-hand to make it as easie and tolerable as might be? Thus solicitous and careful would men be for any thing that was to continue the same although but for a short time here: But what are those things to the endless duration of a soul in a misery, that is a perpetual destruction, and everlasting death; always intolerable, and yet must always be endured. A misery that must last when time itself shall be no more; and the utmost periods we can imagine fall infinitely short of the continuance of it. O the unfathomable Abyss of Eternity! how are our imaginations lost in the conceptions of it! But what will it then be to

be swallowed up in an Abyss of misery and eternity together ? And I do not know how such an eternal State of misery could have been represented in Scripture in words more Emphatical than it is ; not only by *everlasting fire*, and *everlasting destruction*, but by *a worm that never dies*, and *a fire that never goes out* ; and the very same expressions are used concerning the eternal State of the blessed and the damned ; so that if there were any reason to question the one, there would be the same to question the other also.

4. The loss of this world may be abundantly recompenced, but the loss of the Soul can never be. *For what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?* If a man runs the hazard of losing all that is valuable or desirable in this world for the sake of his Soul, heaven and eternal happiness will make him infinite amends for it. He will have no cause to repent of his bargain that parts with his share in this evil world for the joys and glories that are above. They who have done this in the resolution of their minds, have before-hand had so great satisfaction in it, (a) *that they have gloried in tribulations, and rejoiced in hopes of the glory of God* ; they have upon casting up their accounts

(a) Rom.
5. 2, 3.

counts found, (a) *that the sufferings of* (a) 8. 18. *this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed; because the afflictions they meet with here are but light and momentary, but that which they expected in recompence for them, (b) was an exceeding and* (b) 2 Cor. 4. 17. *an eternal weight of Glory.* O blessed change! what life can be so desirable as the parting with it is on such terms as these? It was the hopes of this glorious recompence which inspired so many Martyrs to adventure for Heaven with so much courage, patience, and constancy in the primitive times of the Christian Church. How do they look down from Heaven and despise all the vanities of this World in comparison with what they enjoy! And if they are sensible of what is done on earth, with what pity do they behold us miserable creatures, that for the sake of the honours, pleasures, or riches of this World venture the loss of all which they enjoy and thereby of their Souls too! Which is a loss so great, that no recompence can ever be made for it, no price of redemption can ever be accepted for the delivery of it. For even the Son of God himself who laid down his life for the redemption of Souls, shall then come from
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heaven with flaming fire to take vengeance on all those who so much despise the blood he hath shed for them, the warnings he hath given to them, the Spirit he hath promised them, the reward he is ready to bestow upon them, as in spight of all to cast away those precious and immortal Souls which he hath so dearly bought with his own blood.

Methinks the consideration of these things might serve to awaken our security, to cure our stupidity, to check our immoderate love of this world, and inflame our desires of a better. Wherein can we shew our selves men more than by having the greatest regard to that which makes us men? which is our souls. Wherein can we shew our selves Christians better, than by abstaining from all those hurtful lusts which war against our souls, and doing those things which tend to make them happy? We are all walking upon the shore of eternity, and for all that we know the next tide may sweep us away; shall we only sport and play or gather cockle-shells and lay them in heaps like Children, till we are snatched away past all recovery? It is no such easie matter to prevent the losing our souls as secure sinners

ners are apt to imagine. It was certainly to very little purpose that we are bid (a) *to work out our Salvation* if lying still (a) Phil. 2. 12. would do it; or (b) *to give all diligence about it*, if none would serve the turn: (b) 2 Pet. 1. 10. (c) *or to strive to enter in at the straight gate*, if it were so wide to receive all sinners. No: (d) *Many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able*; what then shall become of those that run as far from it as they can? Those, I mean, whom no intreaties of God himself, no kindness of his Son, no not the laying down his life for their souls, no checks or rebukes of their own consciences can hinder from doing those things which do without a speedy and sincere repentance exclude men from the Kingdom of heaven. O that men could at last be persuaded to understand themselves and set a just value upon their immortal souls! How would they then despise the vanities, conquer the temptations, and break through the difficulties of this present world, and by that means fit their souls for the eternal enjoyment of that blessed State of souls which God the Father hath promised, his Son hath purchased, and the Holy Ghost hath confirmed. To whom be rendred, &c.

F I N I S.

ERRATA.

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then r. that. p. 207. l. 1. r. then give. p. 354. l. 1. *for* Mind r.
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